PART II

THE 1975 PERFORMANCE

PRELIMINARIES

1. Eligibility, Time, and Place

A Nambudiri is eligible to perform the Atirātra-Agnicayana, which is an optional (kāmya) rite, only if he has already performed the Agniṣṭoma. The Agniṣṭoma can only be performed by a brahmin whose ancestors have performed it. If his father or elder brother are alive, they should have performed it before him. Among Nambudiris belonging to the Śukapuram grāmam (see above pages 175–183), 105 families are eligible. In practice, less than seventy-five families have preserved the tradition of performing Agniṣṭoma. As a result of these various restrictions, performances of the Atirātra-Agnicayana have been rare in recent times, as we have already remarked (above page 186).

At the time of the 1975 performance, two Akkitiripads (Nambudiris who have performed the Agnicayana) were alive. At the time of writing (1977) there are three, as the yajamāna of the 1975 performance acquired the title Akkitiripad through that very performance.

Every Nambudiri agrees that one more condition should be met by a prospective yajamāna: he should be strong, which in practice is taken to mean that he should be young. When an eligible yajamāna finally decides to have the ritual performed on his behalf, he has to consult many others, ask the support of his elders, and find the necessary priests. Once this is done, he is in a position to determine time and place for the performance, in consultation with his elders and priests.

Cherumukku Vaidikan Neelakanthan, third son of Cherumukku Vaidikan Vallaban Somayajipad, decided in December 1974 to perform the Agnicayana, or rather, he yielded to his father's persuasion and consented to do it. The date was quite late in view of the many preparations that were required. Moreover, there was some uncertainty whether he would carry out his intention until the final days before the performance. The most likely dates for the ritual to be performed were also fixed in December 1974. These issues were a matter of prolonged discussion, and the decisions were finally triggered by the presence, in Kerala, of Professor Robert Gardner, who was to direct the visual and sound documentation, and the present author. Thus started a period of frantic activity, primarily for the organizers, the priests, and various artisans, and also for all those who were connected with the "Agnicayana Project." The activities connected with this project will be treated in Part III, pages 456–475.

The prescribed season for performing a Soma ritual, including Agniṣṭoma or Atirātra, is Vasanta, "the brilliant season," i.e., spring. Originally the Nambudiris seem to have interpreted Vasanta as *māghādipañca*, "the five months beginning with Māgha," viz., Māgha (January-February), Phālguna (February-March), Caitra (March-April), Vaiśākha (April-May), and Jyaiṣṭha (May-June). In recent times the rituals have been celebrated only during Caitra or Vaiśākha. The ceremonies have to be completed within the bright half (*śuklapakṣa*) of the month, i.e., to begin on or after new moon (*amāvāsyā*) and be over on or before full moon (*pūrṇimāvāsyā*). Or at least the yajamāna should start with the intention of completing the ceremonies before pūrṇimā.

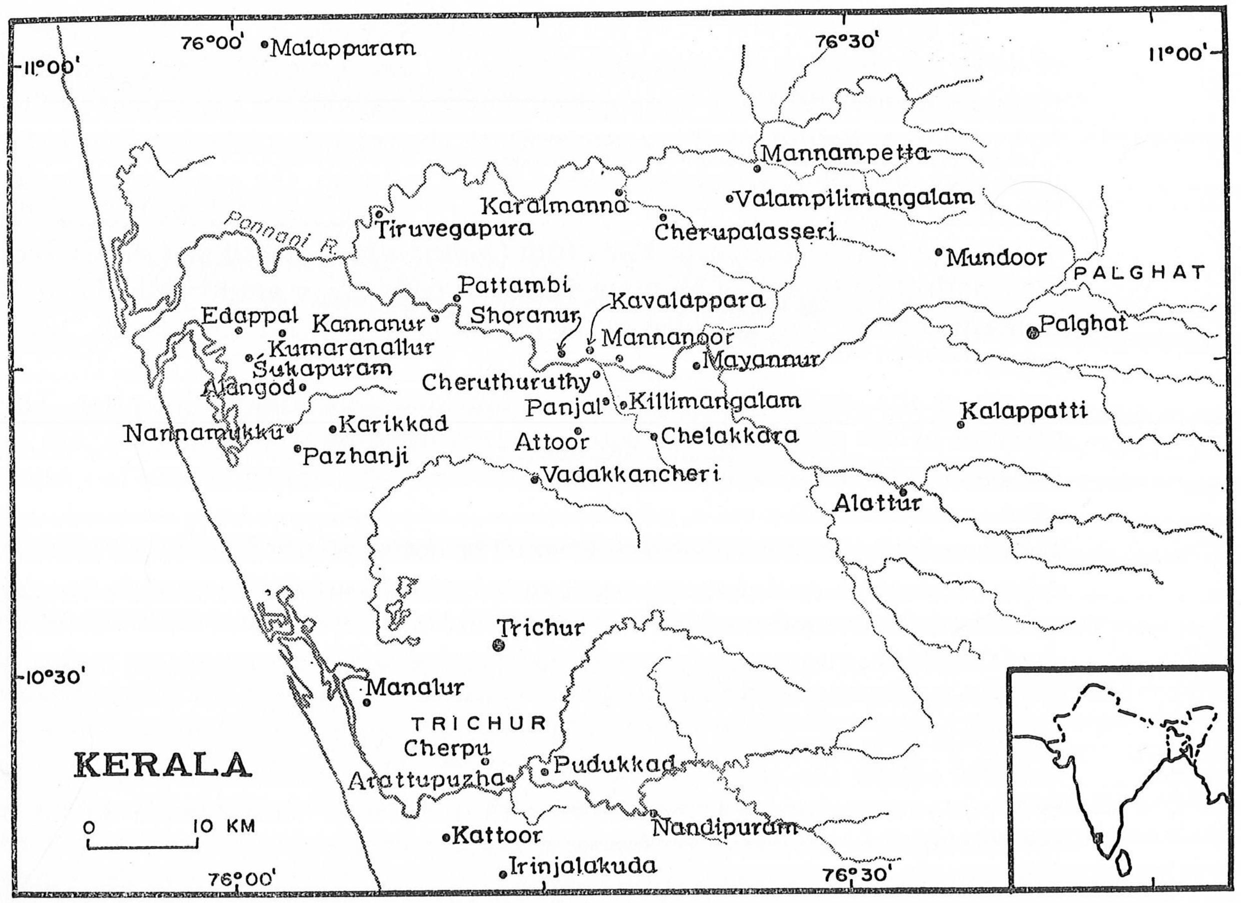
In 1975, the first new moon within the prescribed period, the first day of Caitra, was on April 12; the subsequent full moon, the 15th day of Caitra, was on April 26. Since the ceremonies last for twelve days, the only possible beginning days were April 12, 13, 14, or 15. The ritual could also be performed in Vaiśākha, one month later, but by that time it is even hotter and/or the southwest monsoon will have started, and so it was decided to resort to this later period only in case of emergency. It was similarly decided to start on April 12, rather than on any of the subsequent days.

There is always a risk that the beginning of the performance may have to be postponed: the kṛṣṇājina skin (see below pages 203, 206) might not arrive in time, or there might be pollution (*āśauca*) due, for example, to a death or birth in the immediate (patrilocal) family of the yajamāna or his wife, or to the menses of the wife. If the earliest possible date is chosen, the beginning may be postponed, or the ceremonies interrupted for a few days, and the ritual could still be completed before full moon.

Barring these specific kinds of pollution, the ceremonies, once begun, should continue and be brought to completion at all cost. If one of the priests falls ill or dies, another one replaces him instantly, and the selection ceremony (*ṛtvigvaraṇam*, see below pages 313–316) is performed for the new priest.

The place where the sacrificial enclosure should be constructed is less narrowly circumscribed, and this opened the way to a certain amount of discussion. Tradition prescribes that a Soma ritual should be performed on the banks of a river, in which the avabhṛtha bath on the final day will take place. In south India, temple tanks are considered as auspicious as rivers for ceremonial bathing. Another consideration is that the Soma rituals are always performed in private places. They are never performed near cremation grounds, in temples, or on temple grounds, not only because the Vedic ceremonies are not related to temple worship in any direct manner, but also because the sacred enclosure is set on fire after the performance is over, and one does not set fires near temples.

In December 1974, it was decided to perform the Atirātra-Agnicayana at Panjal (Pāññāl), and to make arrangements for the final bath to take place in the tank of a nearby temple, dedicated to Ayappan. In the past, many Vedic rituals were performed in Panjal to the south of a Viṣṇu temple, which, however, is mostly restricted to Nambudiris. Panjal, which is one of the most important centers of the Nambudiri Jaiminīya Sāmaveda tradition (see Staal 1961, 86), is a hamlet situated at about 76 18′ E and 10 43′ N, in the Cheruthuruthi District of the former Cochin State, at about 5 miles southeast of Shoranur (see Map C).



Map C

2. Measurements and Bricks

THE SIZES OF the ritual enclosure and of the main altars are functions of the size of the yajamāna. Since the brick-made new domestic and offering altars of the Agnicayana are much larger than they are in the Agniṣṭoma, the measurements for the ritual enclosure are increased in the Agnicayana. In the Agniṣṭoma, there are two basic units: *aratni*, consisting of 24 *viral*, and *prakrama*, consisting of 30 viral. The Malayalam viral is a finger's breadth and corresponds to the Sanskrit *aṅgula*. In the Agnicayana, the aratni is the same, but in addition to the prakrama of 30 viral, now called *prākṛta*-prakrama, "ordinary prakrama," there is a *madhyama*-prakrama, "middle prakrama," of 32 1/4 viral, and a *vṛddha*-prakrama, "increased prakrama" of

34 1/3 viral. The latter two are used, as we shall see (below, pages 257–265), for the measurements of the outlines of the Old Hall (*prācīnavaṃśa*) and Great Altar Space (Mahāvedi), respectively, so that the new domestic and offering altars will fit inside.

The basic units, aratni and prakrama, cannot really be measured in terms of viral, for they are relative: they depend on the size of the yajamāna. The ritual enclosure and altars thereby become his own, and are sometimes identified with him. Before anything can be done, the yajamāna has therefore to be measured. Standing with hands raised above his head, the distance from the tips of his fingers to the ground is copied on a measuring stick, subsequently divided into five equal parts. Each fifth (*pañcami*) is marked and determines the length of one aratni of his altar. Next this pañcami or aratni is divided into four equal parts. One is added to the pañcami, resulting in the *sapāda*, "with a quarter" or "one quarter added," which is at the same time *caturthi*, one fourth of the length of the yajamāna, and one prakrama of his altar. The division of the stick into five equal parts is done by trial and error, viz., a piece of wood of about 1/5 of the length of the stick is taken, placed five times against the measuring stick, and if the end is not reached, a little is added, if it goes too far, a little is substracted, etc. The division into four equal parts is done differently. A thin strip of coconut leaf, as long as the stick, is folded once and once again.

One-half of an ordinary (prākṛta) prakrama is called *padam*, "foot"; it consists of 15 virals. One half of an aratni is called *pradeśa*; it consists of 12 virals.

To obtain the madhyama-prakrama ("middle prakrama") measuring rod, add one padam and one pradeśa: 15 + 12 = 27 viral. Divide this by 3 (by folding a string) and the result by 4. We obtain first 9, then 2 1/4 viral. Add this to the prākṛta-prakrama (30 viral) and we obtain the madhyama-prakrama (32 1/4 viral).

To obtain the vṛddha-prakrama ("extended prakrama") measuring rod, add one aratni and one padam: 24 + 15 = 39 viral. Divide this by 3 twice, and we obtain first 13, then 4 1/3 viral. Add this to the prākṛta-prakrama (30 viral) and we obtain the vṛddha-prakrama (34 1/3 viral).

Figure 8 illustrates the three measuring sticks and the four basic measures they exhibit. These three sticks will be used by the Adhvaryu priest in all subsequent measurements.

The bricks of the altars require some additional measurements. The side of the basic square bricks used in the construction of the main altar is one aratni or pañcami, and is therefore already available. But the yajamāna is, in addition, measured from the top of his head to the ground while standing. This distance is divided into three and again into seven equal parts. The resulting units provide the lengths of the two sides of the rectangular bricks needed for the new domestic altar. Lastly, the distance is measured from the yajamāna's knees to the ground. This is again divided into five equal parts, each called *muṭṭu* (in Malayalam). One such unit determines the thickness of the bricks of both the domestic and the offering altar. The final altars will therefore reach up to the knees of the yajamāna.

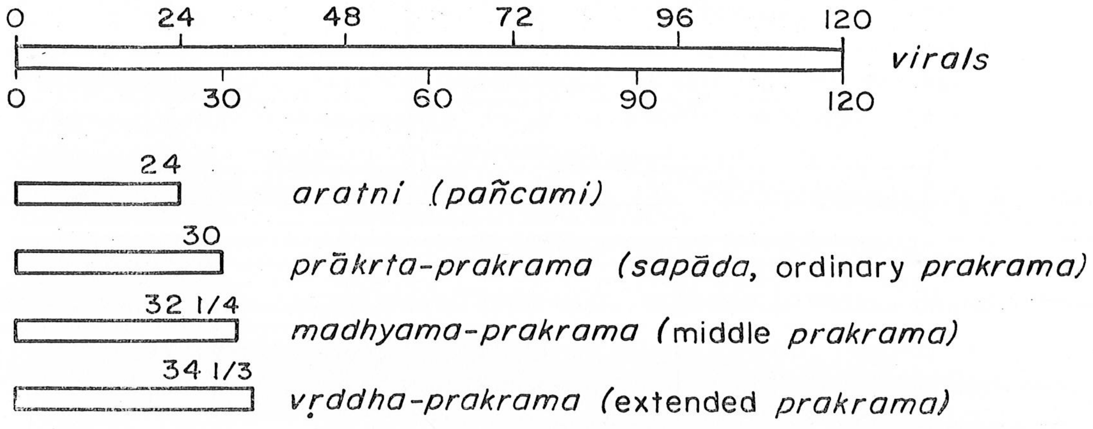

0
24
48
72
96
120
virals
0
30
60
90
120
24
aratni (pañcami)
30
prākṛta-prakrama (sapāda, ordinary prakrama)
32 1/4
madhyama-prakrama (middle prakrama)
34 1/3
vṛddha-prakrama (extended prakrama)

Figure 8—The Four Basic Measures

All these measurements were taken in December 1974, so that the preparation of the bricks could start immediately. The preparation of the bricks is in fact the most time-consuming of the material preparations. More than one thousand fired bricks are required for the large offering altar, and more than one hundred for the new domestic altar. Other bricks are needed for the dhiṣṇya and other hearths, but these are sun dried and need not to be fired in a kiln.

There are several other kinds of material preparations, which will be dealt with in subsequent sections. All these took place simultaneously, involving different kinds of expertise, during the first three months of 1975. While brickmakers, carpenters, potters, goldsmiths and other artisans were at work, the Vaidikans rehearsed *hautram*, *ādhvaryavam*, and *brahmatvam* at Shoranur, in the Nambudiri Sabhā Maṭham, and the Sāmavedins rehearsed *audgātram* at Panjal, mostly in the homes of Itti Ravi, Nellikat Nīlakaṇṭhan Akkitiripad, or in the Viṣṇu temple.

Now let us take a closer look at the bricks themselves. The new domestic altar will be constructed from 105 bricks, equally distributed in five square layers, each of which consists of three by seven rectangular bricks. All these bricks are therefore of the same size, as we have already seen.

The main, bird-shaped offering altar consists of bricks of various rectangular and triangular shapes. Disregarding a refinement (of which anon), the general rule is that the total number of bricks is 1,000: 200 for each of the five layers. As we have seen, there are three traditions of altar construction among the Nambudiri Vaidikans. Two of these are called after the number of tips of the wings of the bird: *pañcapatrikā*, "five-tipped," and

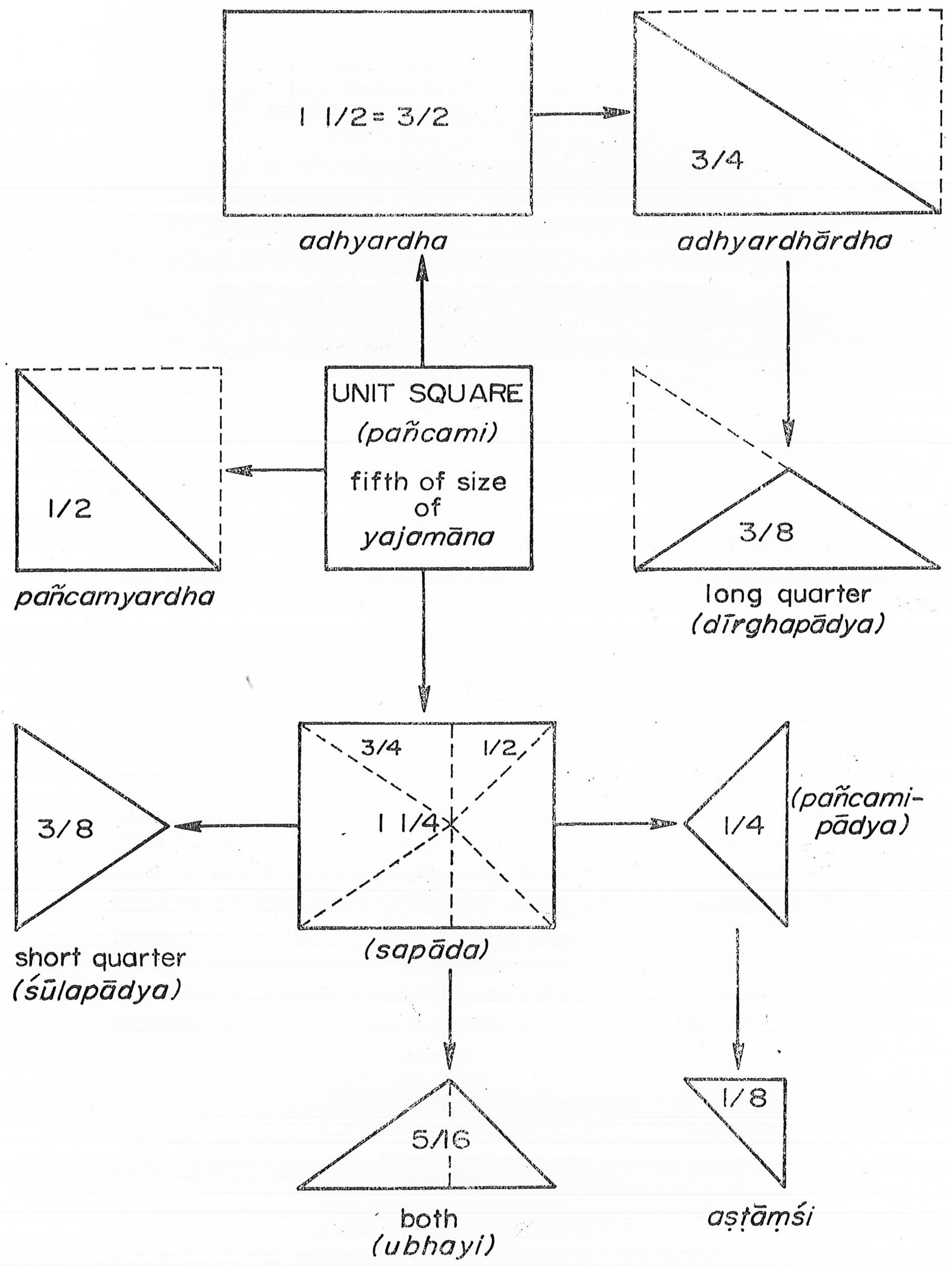


Figure 9—The Shapes of the Bricks

ṣaṭpatrikā, "six-tipped." At the 1975 performance the six-tipped tradition was adopted. In this tradition, there are ten types of bricks, and the basic unit is a square pañcami or aratni. The other shapes are derived from the basic square by adding and subtracting. In this way the following bricks are generated: *pañcamyardha*, "half of fifth"; *adhyardha*, "half-added," *adhyardhārdha*, "half of half-added," and *dīrghapādya*, "long quarter," which is one quarter of half-added. Then the *sapāda*, "with a quarter," is derived, and its long side divided into five equal parts by subtracting from the pañcami unit square the same quarter that had just been added to it. The *sapāda* rectangle is then divided into four parts: *śūlapādya*, "short quarter" (of half-added), *pañcamipādya*, "quarter of fifth," *aṣṭāmśi*, "eighth" (of fifth) and *ubhayi*, "both." The aṣṭāmsi is sometimes called by its Malayalam name eṭṭāṃśi. The derivation of these bricks is illustrated in Figure 9.

Of these ten types of bricks, five only are used in the first, third, and fifth layers, which are all constructed in the same pattern. The second and fourth layers exhibit a much more complex pattern, for which use is made of all the ten types of brick. This is done so that the interstices between bricks (except for the center) are never above or under interstices between bricks on the next layer. The final refinement, referred to before, is confined to the fifth layer. In this layer, six pañcamyardha and four adhyardhārdha bricks are half as thick as the others, viz., a tenth of a muṭṭù, or a tenth of the distance from the knees of the yajamāna to the ground. They are used in pairs, on top of each other.

Table 3 provides the number of each of the types of brick for each of the five layers.

Once the Yajamāna's measurements have been taken, the carpenter makes wooden frames for each of these basic shapes, and also for the rectangulars needed for the new domestic altar. Then clay is made and put inside these frames. When the clay is still wet, the wooden frames are lifted off. When dry, the bricks are placed in a kiln. Brick and tile making is widespread in Kerala, and kilns owned by any of the numerous tile factories are used. The quality of the bricks depends on the quality of the clay and the expertise of the operator of the kilns. In 1975, numerous bricks were broken, even though a large number of extras had been ordered. It became necessary to fire many more bricks at the last minute. It seems that similar difficulties were encountered on earlier occasions.[1]

PLATES 17A-B

Bricks that have been used for the altars should not be used for any other purpose. Once the performance is over and the sacrificial enclosure

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[1] During an Agnicayana performed in Panjal in 1898, the bricks were made by members of the Āndūrān subcaste, hereditary brickmakers who belong to the Nāyar caste. Despite their traditional occupation, they were not experienced, and many bricks broke, so that the enclosure "was spoilt" (personal communication from Professor K. Kunjunni Raja, referring to Kāṇippāyyūr Śaṅkaran Nambudiripad, *Āryanmāruṭe kuṭiyettam*, "Immigration of the Aryans," II, 37).

PLATE 17A

Putting Clay in the Wooden Frames

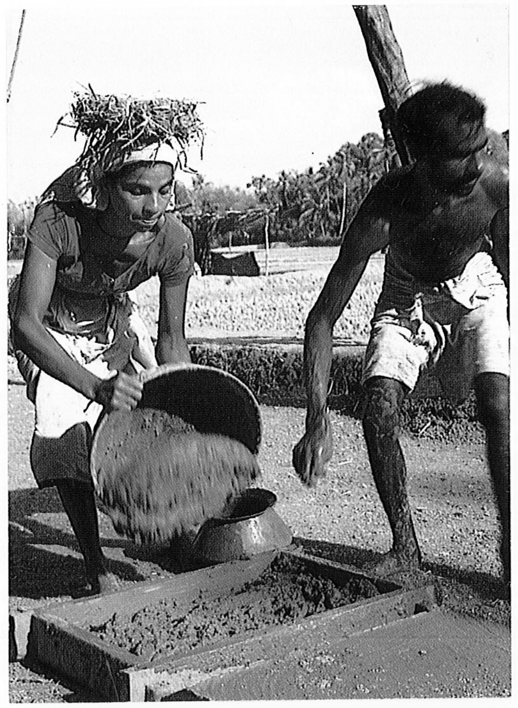
PLATE 17B

Lifting the Wooden Frames

PLATES 17C–D

Transporting the Bricks

The bricks of the altar are a function of the size of the yajamāna, on whose behalf the performance will take place. They will be the bricks of his altar. After the yajamāna has been measured, the carpenter uses his measurements to make wooden frames for each of the basic shapes of the bricks (see Figure 9). Then clay is made and put inside these frames. Before the clay is dry, the frames are lifted off. The bricks are then left to dry in the sun, and are afterwards baked in a kiln. Finally they are transported from the kiln to the place where the ritual will be performed.



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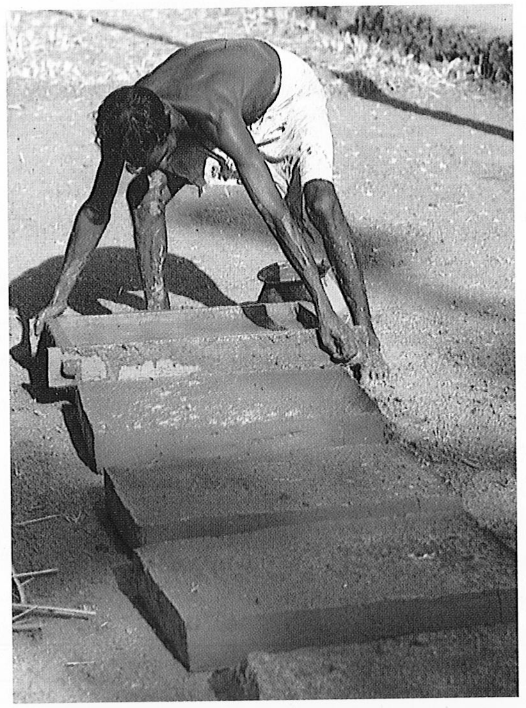

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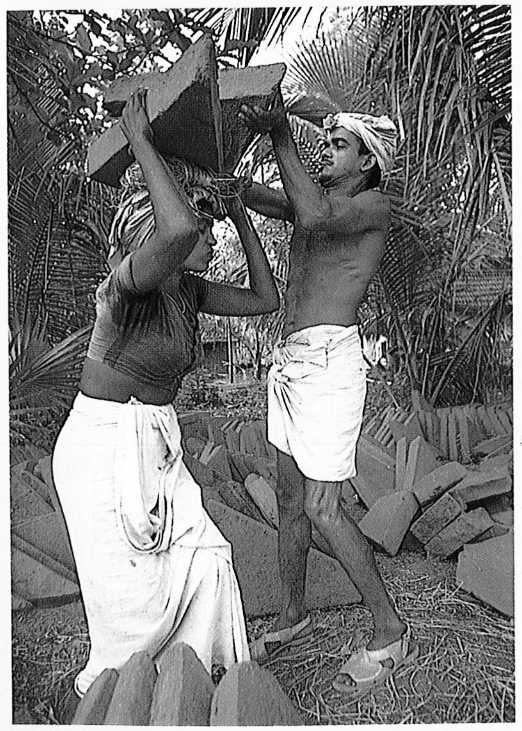


C

D

NUMBER OF BRICKS IN THE FIVE LAYERS

	I	II	III	IV	V	TOTAL
pañcami	38	11	38	11	38	136
sapāda	2	21	2	21	2	48
adhyardha	56	67	56	67	56	302
pañcamyardha	60	12	60	12	63 (6 of 1/2 thickness)	207
adhyardhārdha	44	34	44	34	46 (4 of 1/2 thickness)	202
pañcamipādya	—	11	—	11	—	22
eṭṭāṃśi	—	2	—	2	—	4
śūlapādya	—	6	—	6	—	12
dīrghapādya	—	28	—	28	—	56
ubhayi	—	8	—	8	—	16
	200	200	200	200	205	1,005

TABLE 3

with all its contents has been burnt, the only remnants are the square domestic altar and the bird-shaped offering altar. These can still be seen in different places in Kerala. However, sometimes bricks are taken from the altars and used for the courtyards of Nambudiri homes, for stepping stones, etc. Moreover, among some families it has been customary to perform Agnicayana in one and the same place for several generations. In such cases, the remaining bricks are first removed.

PLATE 16

Because so many bricks were broken in 1975, not only were new bricks made at the last minute, but also bricks were taken after necessary purifications (*saṃskāra*), from the altar constructed during the 1956 Agnicayana performance on behalf of Nellikat Nīlakaṇṭhan Akkitiripad. This altar, partly overgrown by vegetation, was in his compound, less than a mile away. Though the size of Nellikat Akkitiripad's bricks was obviously not appropriate, they were still in very good shape. The Akkitiripad gave permission for bricks to be removed from several layers of his altar, on condition that they would be restored afterwards, and that the first layer would not be touched. Though the rule is that no bricks should be tampered with, it is felt that it is especially inappropriate to take bricks from the first layer, because of the important things which are buried under it (see below, pages 395–414).

PLATES 17C-D. 18A

Once the newly made bricks were ready, they were transported from the kiln to a spot near the ritual enclosure by truck; and finally carried and piled up outside the enclosure.

PLATE 75B

Certain bricks are marked with drawings in white paste. The five bricks called ṛṣabha ("bull"), one for each of the five layers, are marked with a picture of a bull. The maṇḍala ("circle") bricks for the first, third, and fifth layers, are marked with a circle. The brick called vikarṇī (interpreted as "a woman without ears"), which will be placed in the fifth layer, has a picture of such a woman drawn on it. And finally, the aṣāḍha ("invincible") brick of the first layer is marked with three lines.

3. Soma, Antelope Skin, and Woods

When the Nambudiris plan to perform a Soma ritual, they officially inform the Raja of Kollengode and request him to provide Soma (viz., the substitute *Sarcostemma brevistigma*: see above page 105), the skin of a black antelope (kṛṣṇājina), and one kind of wood, needed for making ritual implements. The letter is of the following form:

> Letter from Ceṟumukkŭ Vaidikan Somayājipad, Kiluprakkāṭ Nīlakaṇṭhan Somayājipad (and three others) on behalf of the Śukapuram Sabhā Yogam:
>
> May the Secretary Pandarathil Kunju Menon inform the Chief Rājā of the Veṅganat Palace that it has been decided to perform Agni for Ceṟumukkŭ Vaidikan Nīlakaṇṭhan Somayāji during the bright half of the coming month Vasanta, and that the necessary Soma, kariññāli wood, and a flawless skin of the black deer be provided and this letter acknowledged.
>
> For the information of
> His Highness the Mahārājā
> of the Veṅganāṭ Palace.

(see also Part III, Volume II, pages 279–299)

The antelope skin has to be flawless, with horns and hoofs. It is used by the yajamāna to sit on from the time of his consecration onwards. When he walks, he folds it and carries it, generally over his arm. Other antelope skins, or at least pieces of skin, are needed for the mud from which the ukhā pots are made, for a sling for the ukhā pot, and for preparing the sandals (*upānah*) for the yajamāna, adhvaryu, brahman, and pratiprasthātā when they walk on the Agni ground (*agnikṣetra*) and later on the altar.

While there is no difficulty about obtaining Soma and the required woods, the black antelope appears to be extinct in the territory of the Raja,

PLATE 18A

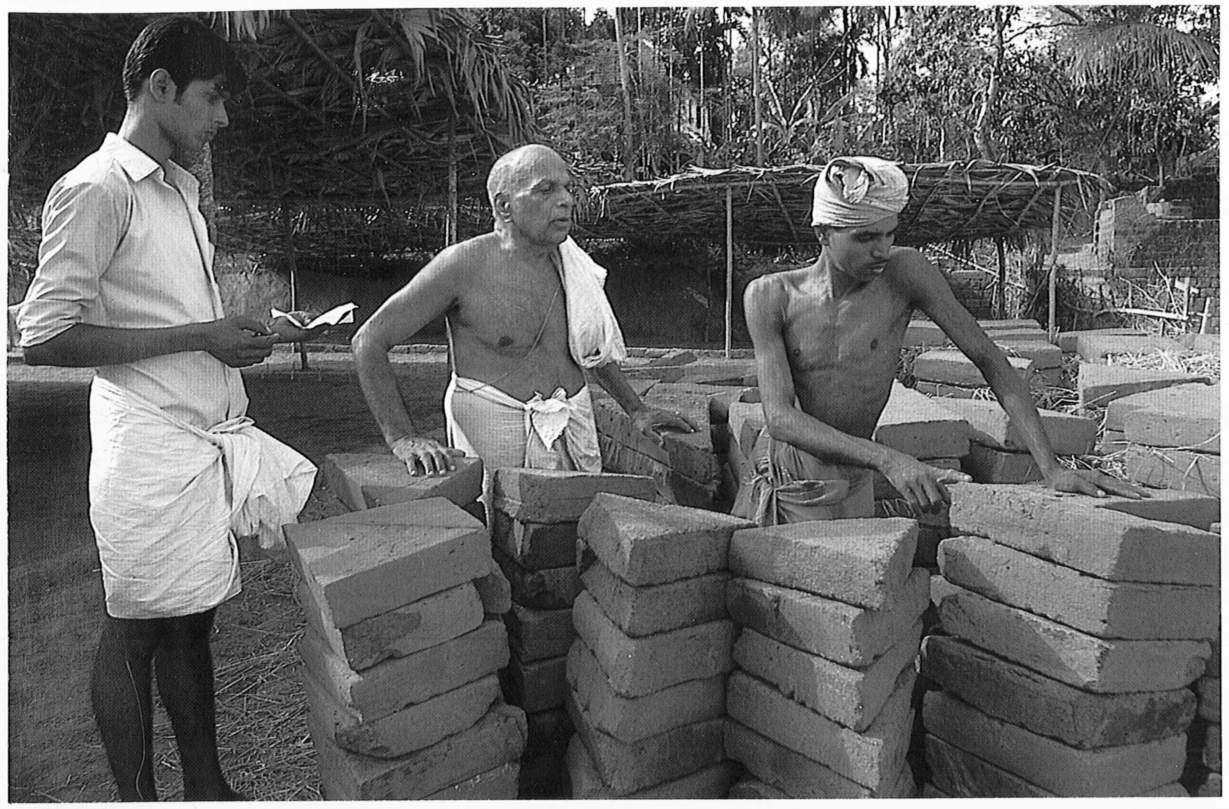
Inspection of Bricks

When they are ready, the bricks are piled up round the area where the ritual will be performed. There are ten different basic shapes: 136 squares; 48 rectangles of 1 1/4 × 1;302 rectnagles of 1 1/2 × 1;207 equilateral triangles (6 of half thickness;; and many other triangles (see Table 3). Itti Ravi Nambudiri inspects their numbers after they have been delivered, taking into account that some may break and others have already broken, so that there should be extras of each kind.

PLATE 18B

Inspection of Antelope Skins

In general, animal skins are impure and should not be touched, certainly not by brahmins. However, in the ritual, the skin of a black antelope (kṛṣṇājina) is needed for the yajamāna to sit on, and other pieces of skin are needed for sandals for the priests (see Plate 71B) and for a few other purposes. Traditionally it is the task of the Raja of Kollengode to provide these animal skins. However, the animal has become very rare in the hilly regions of his former kingdom. So the present author and members of his team went to Varanasi (Banaras) to purchase some skins in the market. Fortunately, one of these skins was flawless, and retained its horns and hoofs.



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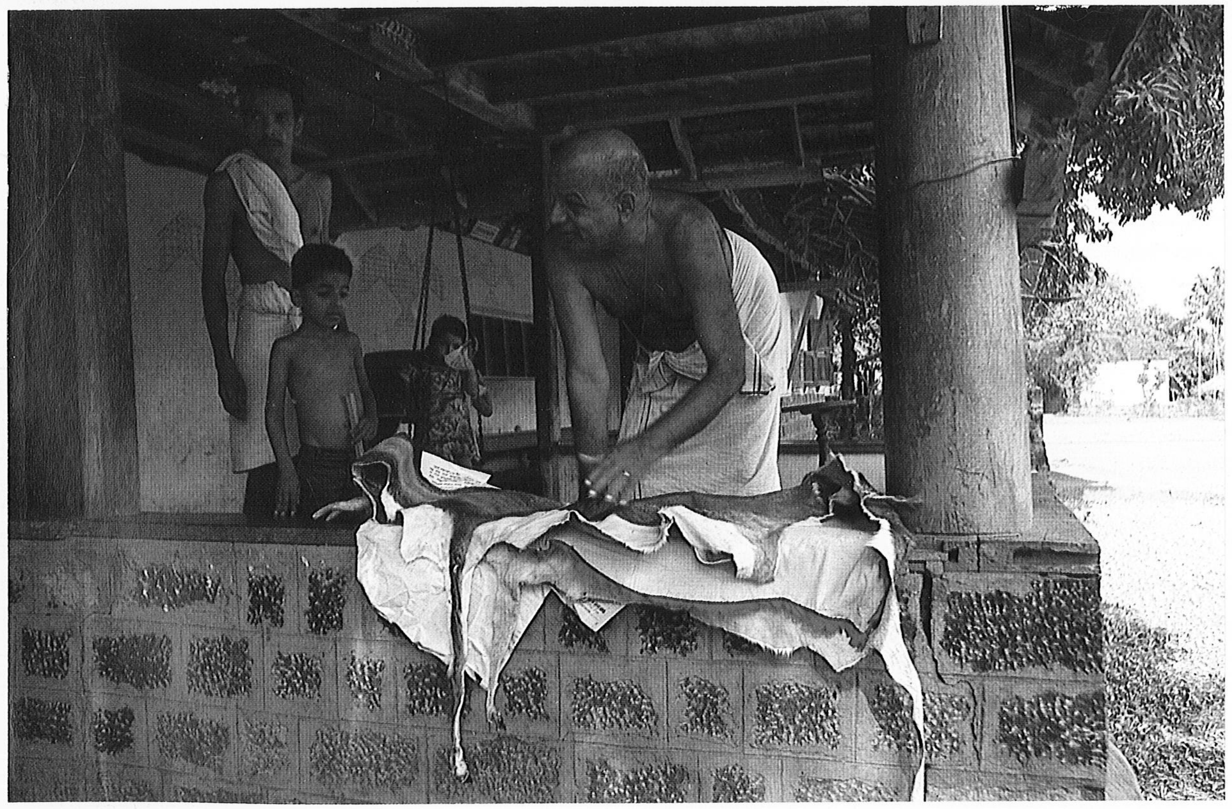

B

PLATE 18B

in the Anaimalai Hills of the Western Ghats. The Raja consented to provide the skin, but the Nambudiri organizers were doubtful whether he would be able to keep his promise. Considerable efforts were therefore spent to obtain antelope skins from elsewhere. In due course, some specimens were procured by Dr. C.G. Kashikar in Poona, and by us in Varanasi. A bullock skin is also needed, to put the Soma on at the time of purchase and pressing. It was obtained locally and without difficulty. The Raja sent another antelope skin, but by that time the performance had already begun.

4. Wooden Implements

(in collaboration with George Dales)

PLATES 19–27

THE CARPENTER MAKES a variety of wooden implements, needed for the ritual proceedings. He belongs to the *marāśāri* or *āśāri*, "carpenter," caste, a subdivision of the *kammālan* artisan caste.

The wooden implements used in the rituals are made from specific kinds of wood, and we shall therefore begin with a list of their names in Sanskrit and Malayalam, along with their botanical identification:

SANSKRIT	MALAYALAM	
aśvattha	*arayāl*	*Ficus religiosa* Linn.[1]
bilba	*kūlakam*	*Aegle marmelos* Corr.
khadira	*kariññāli*	*Acacia sundra* D.C.
nyagrodha	*perāl*	*Ficus Bengalensis* Linn.[1]
palāśa	*plāś*	*Butea frondosa* Koen, Roxb.
udumbara	*atti*	*Ficus glomerata* Roxb.[1]
vahni	*vahni*	*Prosopis spicigera* Linn.
varaṇam or *varuṇam*	*nīrmāṭala*	*Crataeva religiosa* Forst.
vikaṅkata	*vayyaṅkat*	*Flacourtia sapida* Roxb.
vṛkṣāmla	*puḷi*	*Tamarindus indica* L.

I shall refer to these woods by their Sanskrit names, which are commonly used in the ritual texts. There are several wooden implements that the yajamāna already possesses, and that a carpenter had made on earlier occasions. These include the ladles required for the daily Agnihotra (in particular the *agnihotra-havanī* made from vikaṅkata wood) and implements for making fire: the upper kindling block (*uttarāraṇi*), the lower kindling block (*adharāraṇi*; both made from aśvattha wood), a churning rod (*mantha*, Malayalam:

PLATE 1

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[1] For a pertinent discussion of the significance of these fig species, especially the *aśvattha*, see Emeneau 1949.

iṭattaṇṭu, made from vṛkṣāmla wood), and a rope. A half coconut shell may be used to press the mantha down into a hole in the adharāraṇi. The churning rod itself is elaborately carved with a cross section like a twelve-fluted column. In fact, the overall design of the rod resembles an architectural column. An iron peg is embedded in the upper end as a pivot point. Iron sleeves protect each end. The fire-generating wooden tip is replaceable. It is attached to the rod by means of a triangular recess in the lower end of the rod.

PLATES 4, 48, 91A, 95

In the śrauta rites, the most important ladles are juhū (made from palāśa wood), *dhruva* (made from vikaṅkata), and sruva (made from khadira). The first two are called *sruc*. They are of equal length and relatively similar in shape. Sometimes notches are cut into the end of the handles to help distinguish one type from the other. The sruva has a much smaller serving end. It is generally used to scoop butter from a dish. The *upabhṛt* ladle, made from aśvattha wood, is generally held under the juhū. There are also substitute juhū and upabhṛt ladles, of the same shape, size and wood as the originals, but provided with a lid. They are used when the originals are already employed. The substitute for the juhū is called *pracaraṇī*, and the substitute for the upabhṛt, which is only used in the animal sacrifice, is called: *pṛṣadājyagrahaṇī*.

PLATE 65

Other implements made from khadira wood are: the sphya knife used in many special rites; the dhṛṣṭi ladle for preparing the hot milk of the Pravargya ceremony; the *śamyā* pin or wedge of the yoke of the Soma cart; the *musala* pestle for pounding grain; and the *prāśitra*, in the shape of a kind of cameleon (called *ōntu* in Malayalam), on the back of which the sacrificial cakes are placed.

PLATE 2

Grains are crushed in the *ulūkhala* mortar, made from varaṇam. Three oblong containers are made from the same wood: the largest is the *dārupātri*, a trough called after *dāru*, "wood" (etymologically related to English "tree"), in which the sacrificial cakes are placed; *iḍāpātram*, a receptacle for the *iḍā* meal, of similar shape but shorter; and *praṇīta-praṇayanam*, in which the *praṇīta* waters are transported.

PLATE 3, 53
PLATE 58
PLATE 20B

For the animal sacrifice, the carpenter makes an octagonal sacrificial pole (yūpa) from bilba wood. The Soma rituals require many special implements. The largest are the Soma cart (*śakaṭa*), made from nyagrodha wood with two spokeless wheels, and the stool or "throne" (*āsandī*), made from udumbara, on which King Soma is installed south of the domestic altar. Nyagrodha wood is also used for making the *droṇakalaśa* vessel and the *pariplu* dish, used to scoop the Soma extract from it.

PLATE 23C, 24, 101

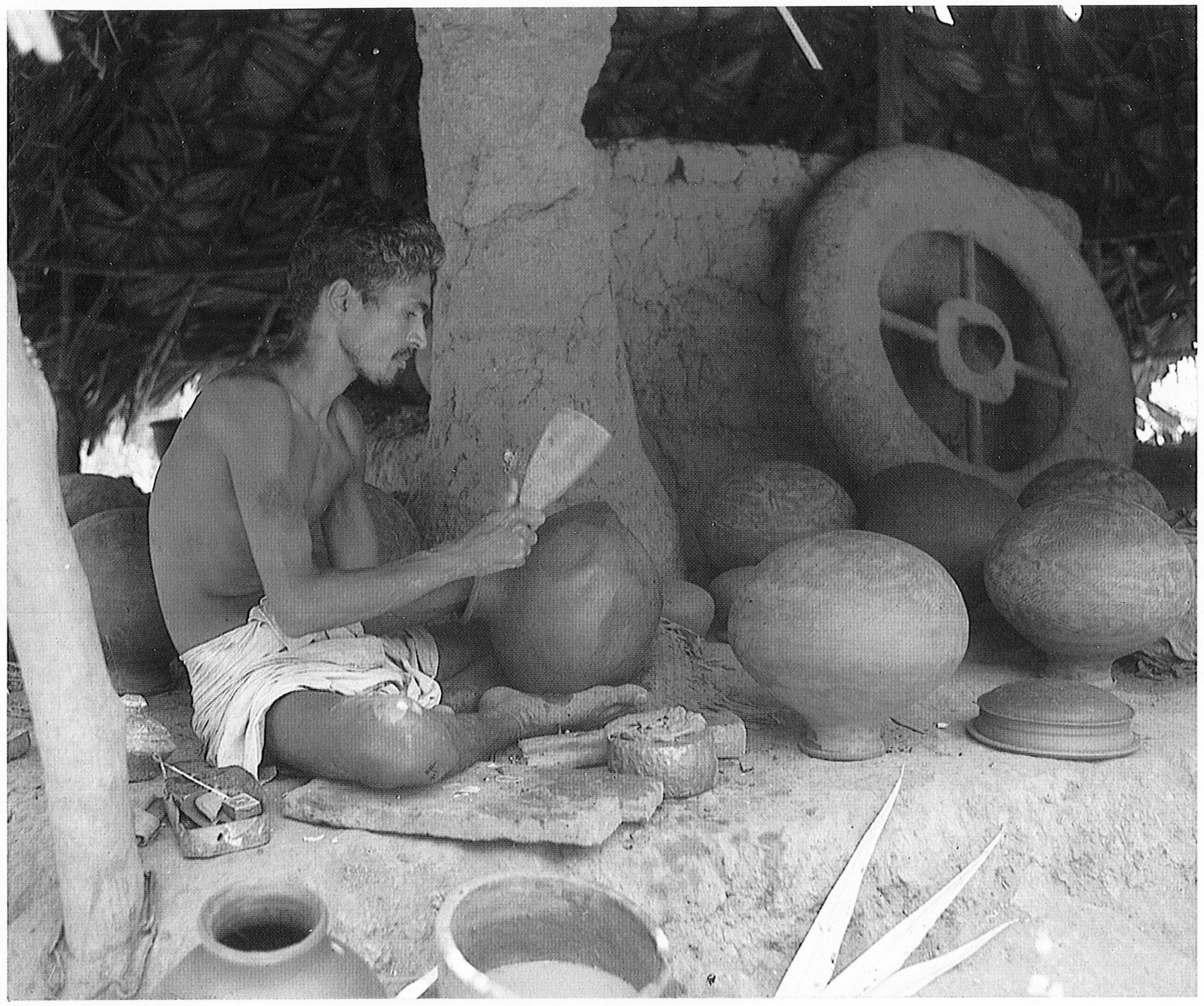
As we have seen (p. 52), in addition to the yajamāna, ten of his priests are called camasin, "cupbearer"; they have their own Soma cup (camasa). The principal cupbearers (*mukhya-camasin*) are hotā, brahman, udgātā, yajamāna, and sadasya. The hotā's cup is larger (height: 12 1/2 cm, side: 18 cm.) than the others (height: 7 1/2 cm, side: 12 1/2 cm, on the average).

(Continues on page 214)

PLATE 19

The Potter

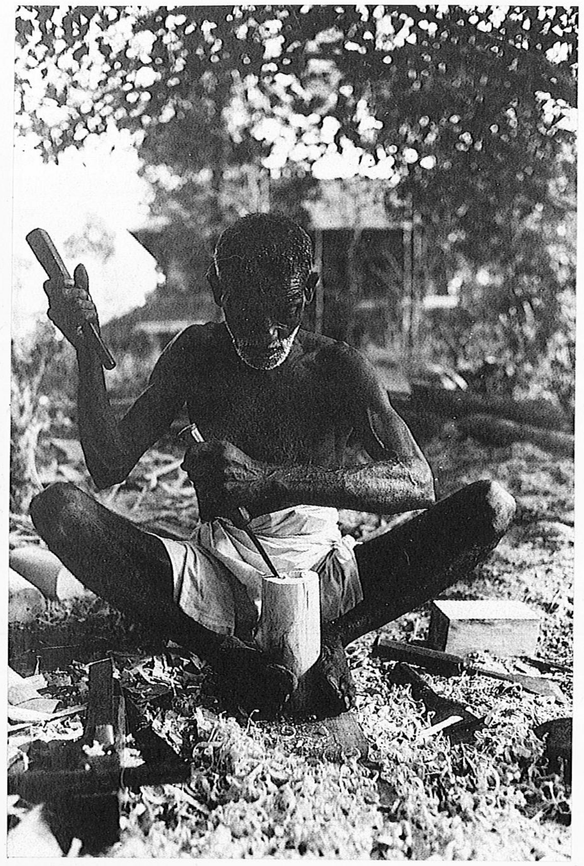
The potter uses his wheel for all the clay pots that have to be made. He fashions several other items, such as the clay heads, by hand.



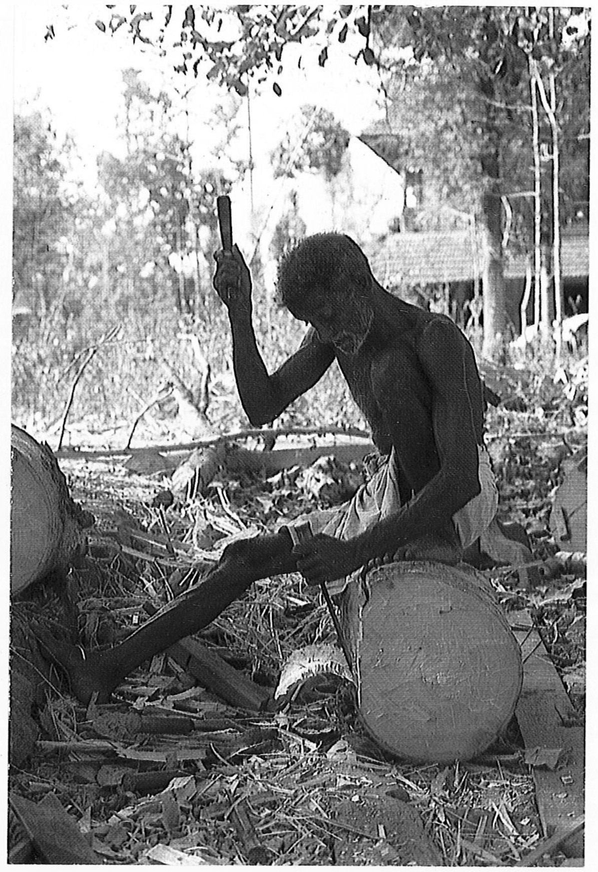
PLATES 20A-C

The Carpenter

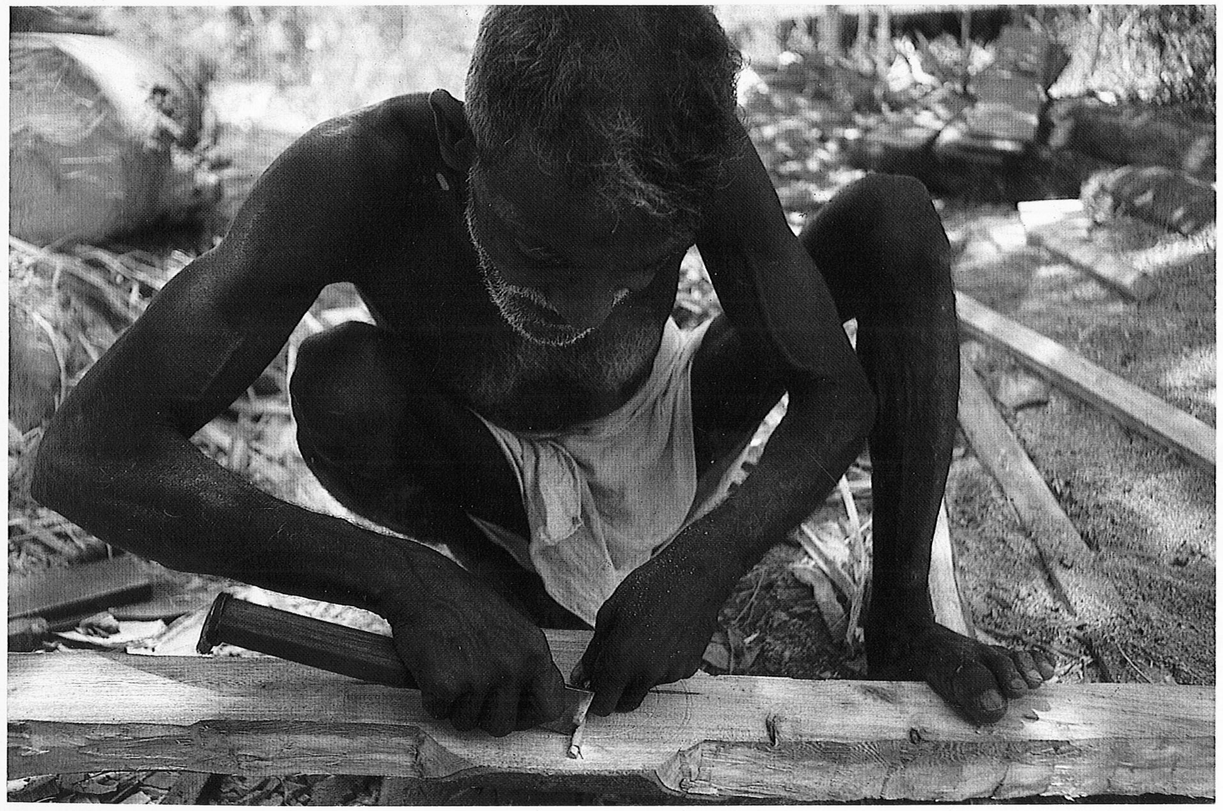
The Carpenter, working with two assistants, makes all the wooden implements required in the ritual. They have to be made from different woods, and the shapes are prescribed by tradition. Though Itti Ravi Nambudiri provided the necessary instructions, the carpenter had performed these tasks in the past and was obviously fully experienced. Among the many items he fashions, there are Soma goblets, such as the maitrāvaruṇa-pātram, made of nyagrodha wood (*Ficus bengalensis*, Linn.) and fashioned with two breasts (20A). Since each of the wooden implements has to be made of a single piece, large vessels such as the droṇakalaśa require an entire tree trunk to start with (20B). Another special item is the śapham, which will subsequently be split lengthwise to constitute a pair of poles that will be used to lift the hot mahāvīra pot (20C; see Plate 58).



A



B

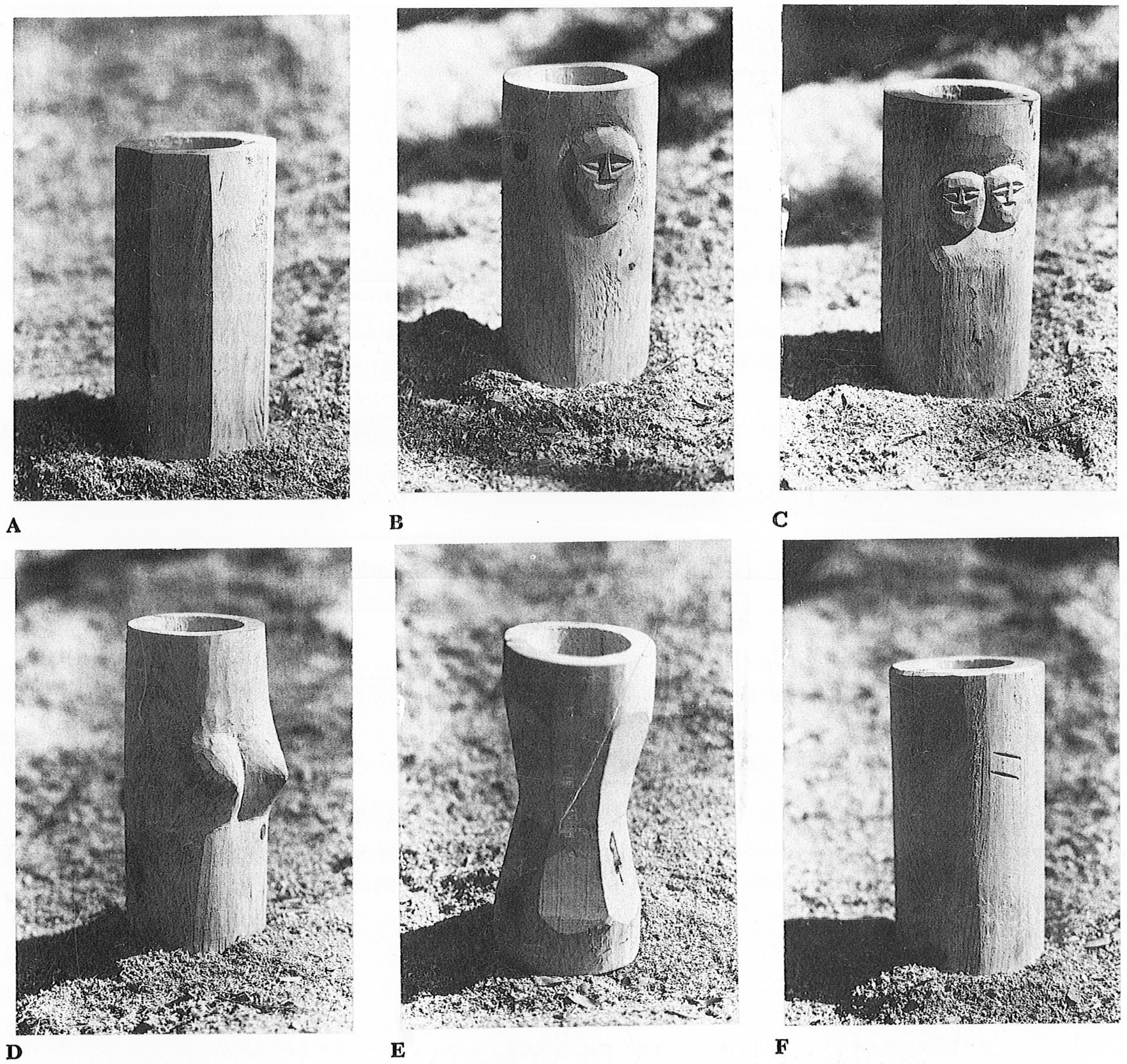


C

PLATE 21

Soma Goblets Made of Nyagrodha Wood

A. Antaryāma-pātram, eight-cornered (*aṣṭakoṇa*)
B. Ṛtu-pātram, with a face (*mukham*)
C. Ṛtu-pātram, with two faces (*mukhe*)
D. Maitrāvaruṇa-pātram, with breasts (*stanau*)
E. Ukthya-pātram, with halves (*āyava*) and eight-cornered
F. Atigrāhya-pātram, round (*vṛtta*)



All cups are square, each is made out of one piece of nyagrodha wood, and their handles have specific shapes. A Sanskrit verse characterizes them:

> *vṛttaṃ catuḥsraktir atha trikoṇam*
> *pṛthuś ca savyāvṛta eva mukhyāḥ*
> *adhordhvavakraṃ dvitayaṃ pradakṣiṇaṃ*
> *rāsnā ca śaṅkuḥ camasasya lakṣaṇam*
> Round, square, and triangular,
> wide and turned to the left are the principal ones.
> Bent downward and upward, double, turning to the right,
> girded and pointed, these are the cups' marks.

The order of priests is explained by another verse, which begins as follows:

> *praitu hotuś camasaḥ pra brahmaṇaḥ prodgātuḥ*
> *pra yajamānasya pra sadasyasya*
> *hotrakāṇāṃ. . . .*
> First the hotā's cup should come, then that of brahman and udgātā,
> next of yajamāna and sadasya,
> then of the hotrakas. . . .

The hotrakas are those who have a hearth in the sadas, except for the hotā. They are enumerated in the same order as their dhiṣṇya hearths, from south to north (see page 586 and Figure 42), viz., omitting the hotā, as follows: maitrāvaruṇa, brāhmaṇācchaṃsin, potā, neṣṭā, acchāvāka, to which finally the āgnīdhra (whose hearth is further north in his own shed) is added. Summing up, the assignment of the cupbearers' cups is as follows:

SHAPE OF HANDLE OF CAMASA:	CAMASIN:
round (*vṛtta*)	hotā
square (*catuḥsrakti*)	brahman
triangular (*trikoṇa*)	udgātā
wide (*pṛthu*)	yajamāna
turned to the left (*savyāvṛta*)	sadasya
downward (*adhas*)	maitrāvaruṇa
upward (*ūrdhva*)	brāhmaṇācchaṃsin
double (*dvitaya*)	potā
turned to the right (*pradakṣiṇa*)	neṣṭā
girded (*rāsna*)	acchāvāka
pointed (*śaṅku*)	āgnīdhra

PLATES 21, 104, 105 Some oblations, called *graha*, are made to the gods in round goblets called *pātram* or *upaśayam*. They have specific names (called after gods or

rites) and shapes. Their average height is 18 cm and diameter 7 1/2 cm, but the opening in the top that contains the liquid is only about 3 cm deep. They are from different kinds of wood:

NAME:	SHAPE:	WOOD:
ṛtu-pātram	one- and two-faced	nyagrodha
maitrāvaruṇa-pātram	with two breasts	nyagrodha
aindravāyava-pātram	girded	nyagrodha
antaryāma-pātram	eight-cornered	nyagrodha
āśvina-pātram	two-edged	nyagrodha
āditya-upaśayam	narrow-waisted	nyagrodha
ukthya-upaśayam	narrow-waisted and eight-cornered	nyagrodha
upāṃśu-pātram	round	nyagrodha
atigrāhya-patram	round	nyagrodha
ṣoḍaśi-pātram	square	udumbara
dadhigraha-pātram	square	udumbara
manthi-pātram	round	vikaṅkata
śukra-pātram	round	bilba

PLATE 20A

The śukra-pātram will be made later, from the sacrificial pole (see page 403). Notches are again used to distinguish similar looking goblets from each other. A final cup, shaped like a leaf, is the *sārvauṣadha-pātram*, made of udumbara wood, used for making offerings of "all herbs" (*sarvoṣadha*). PLATE 60A

The optional Pravargya ceremony requires several implements made from udumbara wood: *śapham*, a pair of poles used for lifting the hot mahāvīra pot; and another stool or throne (āsandī) for installing mahāvīra pots and other Pravargya implements south of the throne for King Soma. PLATES 20C PLATE 60B

The Agnicayana calls for more items made from udumbara wood: a plough with which the field of Agni is ploughed before the altar construction begins; the *praseka*, a large ladle used for the continuous ghee offering of Flow of Wealth; and a small toy cart (*ratham*) with four spokeless wheels, used for the Holding-of-the-Realm oblations on the ninth day. PLATE 64 PLATES 88–90 PLATE 91

Like all the Vedic ritual implements, these wooden utensils are of an archaic simplicity. Zimmer has commented upon this: "The complete absence of all decorative symbolism contrasts dramatically with the rich adornment usual in Indian ritual objects." He is probably right when he adds: "The homeland of such simplicity was not India, but those Central Asian steppes whence the late descendants of the Old Stone Age hunters poured southward and westward, during the second millenium B.C., not only into India, but also into the ancient culture-lands of the Mediterranean" (1955, 39, 41).

5. Clay Implements

(in collaboration with George Dales)

PLATES 19, 28–32

THE POTTER, WHO belongs to the *kumbhāran* caste, has as much to do as the carpenter. Many of the clay pots and dishes he makes are indistinguishable from those that are in daily use throughout India. The following descriptions are partly based upon an extra set of ritual implements, made for the use of scholars when the implements for the ritual were made. The extra set is preserved at the University of California at Berkeley. No specific observations were made of the manufacturing processes in the field, but from the Berkeley examples certain remarks can be made. Most of the vessels are made of a fine- to medium-grained paste fired to an orange buff color. Many have an orangish wash applied—often sloppily—to the exterior surfaces and over the rim. The most common exterior decorations include multiple bands of grooves and ridges, streak-burnishing, punctated designs in bands surrounding the shoulder, and multiple intersecting line patterns on the bases of jars and pots produced by a carved paddle. The most elaborate vessels have applied conical projections around the shoulder, erect penis spouts, and breasts. These three features occur in varying combinations on different types of vessels.

PLATES 40, 100

PLATES 30, 66, 98B, 99

Foremost among the vessels are large pots, called *kalam* and *kuṭam* in Malayalam. The former has a bigger mouth than the latter. The corresponding Sanskrit terms are *ghaṭa* and *kumbha*. Among smaller vessels, one is used for milking (*dohana*). There are dishes of varying size called *caṭṭi* (Sanskrit *sthālī*). These bowls appear to be mass-produced items, quite indifferently fired, resulting in warping, asymmetry, and differential coloring. They follow a strict stylistic pattern, however, with externally beaked rims, shallow spiral grooves on the exterior of the upper body, and the center of the base characterized by a low nipple profile. The different sizes are carefully controlled so that each bowl nestles neatly into the next largest size to form a stacked set of bowls. One dish differs from the others in having a more elaborate external profile with deep grooves and a sharp projecting ledge dividing the shoulder from the base of the bowl. It is called *pṛṣṭhodvapanī* (in Malayalam: *arakkan caṭṭi*). Smaller, more crudely formed *kapālam* vessels are used for preparing puroḍāśa rice cakes. The name itself means "pottery sherd" and actually, sherds are sometimes used for this purpose. The smallest are used for water for washing hands.

PLATES 62, 82

PLATE 83

PLATES 46, 50

Characteristic of Kerala is a pot with a spout called *kiṇḍi* or *kaṟaka-kiṇḍi*. They come in all sizes. A larger one with two breasts added to the spout, also called kaṟakam, will be used by the pratiprasthātā to pour a continuous stream of water, while he circumambulates the completed altar (pages 534–537). Small kiṇḍi vessels made of brass are also used, e.g., for sprinkling water. Together with the typical brass lamps (Malayālam: *viḷakku*) and dishes (*uruḷi*) of Kerala, they are probably best regarded as Hindu intrusions into the Vedic ritual. They are outside the potter's domain.

Special clay vessels are needed in the Soma ritual: water is poured from the *sambharaṇī*, Soma juice is mixed in the *ādhavanīya* and kept in the *pūtabhṛt*, a large vessel with two breasts. Large clay pots like these are called *piṭāvu* in Malayalam. Another large kalam vessel is the *āgrāyaṇa*, used during the Soma pressings. One of the Soma vessels, with a ring of sharp clay projections or thorns around it, is called *muḷḷu* in Malayalam. All the distinctions of shape between these pots are customary, not Vedic. They are "human" (*mānuṣa*), in the words of Erkkara Raman.

PLATES 5B, 60B, 85, 90

The most important object of the Pravargya ceremony is the mahāvīra pot. Use is also made of two clay ladles, called *pinvanam*. The potter prepares the mahāvīra pot on his potter's wheel and not by hand, as the ancient texts prescribe (cf. Kashikar 1969; van Buitenen 1968; Kramrisch 1975). Unlike what is suggested in the texts, the mahāvīra pot is not fired with its bottom up. It is placed in the oven sideways and generally with its opening facing east. The pinvanam ladles are put to the east, the *ājyasthālī* dish (a dish for ājya, "ghee") and the kapālam potsherds to the west of the mahāvīra pot. Unlike the other pots, the mahāvīra, though prepared by the potter, is ritually made by the priests during one of the ceremonies that take place on the second day (see below, page 336).

PLATES 5A, 71, 72A

PLATES 41–42

The Agnicayana requires numerous clay items. Foremost among them is the ukhā pot, which has eight breasts or udders around its circumference. Like the mahāvīra, it is prepared by the potter and, subsequently, ritually made (together with eight of the bricks) by the priests during a special ceremony, the *Ukhāsambharaṇa* rite (below, pages 286–302). The construction of this elaborate vessel is of some interest. The base is actually a bottomless bowl made separately and attached up-side-down to the bottom of the large upper bowl. The ledge-rim of the base is decorated with deep concentric grooves—unusual, if this smaller bowl was originally intended to have been a base for another vessel. The breasts are hollow with a tiny aperture and are attached to the exterior solid surface of the vessel. This is true also of the other type of vessels having breasts, so they are nonfunctional as opposed to the spouts. All the surfaces of the large upper bowl of the ukhā vessel are elaborately decorated with burnished lines, especially the interior, where a center square motif is connected with the rim by radial burnish streaks.

One detail in the preparation of the ukhā pot is reminiscent of the special prescription given in the Kātyāyana Śrauta Sūtra (above, page 136), though it is not identical with it: when the ukhā pot is put in the fire made of cowdung, chips of firewood, and dry grass, accompanied by the recitation of Taittirīya Saṃhitā 4.1.6.2 d (below, page 299), it must be placed sideways with its opening facing east. In the case of the mahāvīra, as we have just seen, this is also the general practice. In the case of the ukhā it is prescribed explicitly in the Malayalam text of the Yāgambhāṣa. The Ceṟumukku̇ text has: *kiḻakku̇ bilampaṭa*, the Taikkāṭ text: *kiḻakkōṭṭu̇ talayāyi veykkaṇam*. Both expressions mean: "put the pot with its opening facing east."

(Continues page 240)

PLATES 22-32

Wooden and Clay Implements

At the time the carpenter and potter prepared the wooden and clay implements for the ritual, an extra set was made for the use of scholars. This was especially valuable in view of the fact that almost all ritual implements used during the ritual would be destroyed on the last day of the performance. The extra set is preserved at the University of California, Berkeley. The following eleven drawings were made from this collection by George Dales, who also assisted with their description in Chapters 4 and 5.

PLATE 22

A: dhruva B: juhū C: sruva D: sphya E: dhṛṣṭi
F: prāśitra.

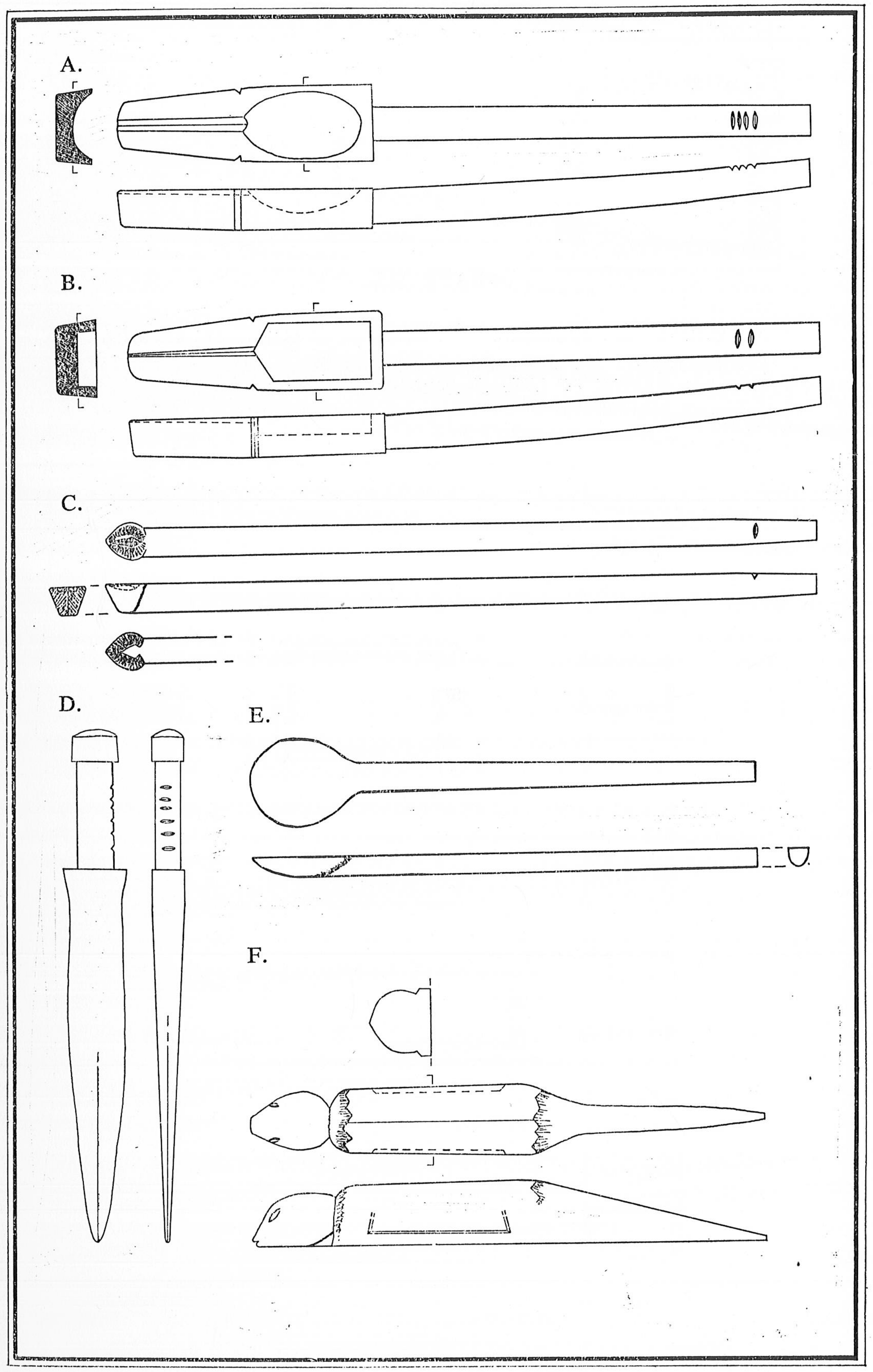


PLATE 23

A: śamyā B: mūsalam C: camasa of hotā D: praṇītapraṇayanam E: dārupātri. F: mantha

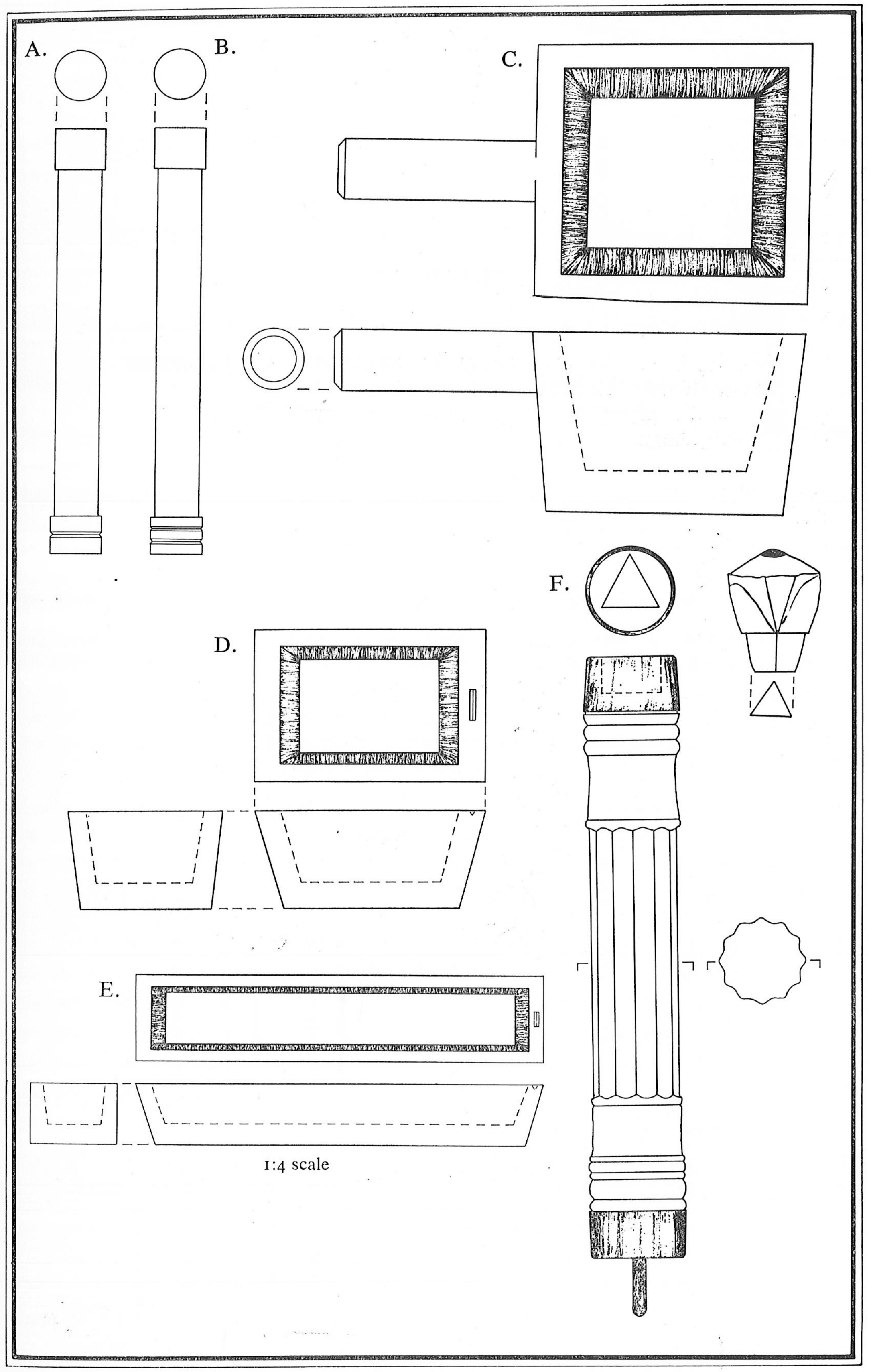


PLATE 24

Camasa Cups of A: acchāvāka B: udgātā C: āgnīdhra D: potā E: maitrāvaruṇa F: brahman G: yajamāna H: sadasya I: brāhmaṇācchaṃsin.

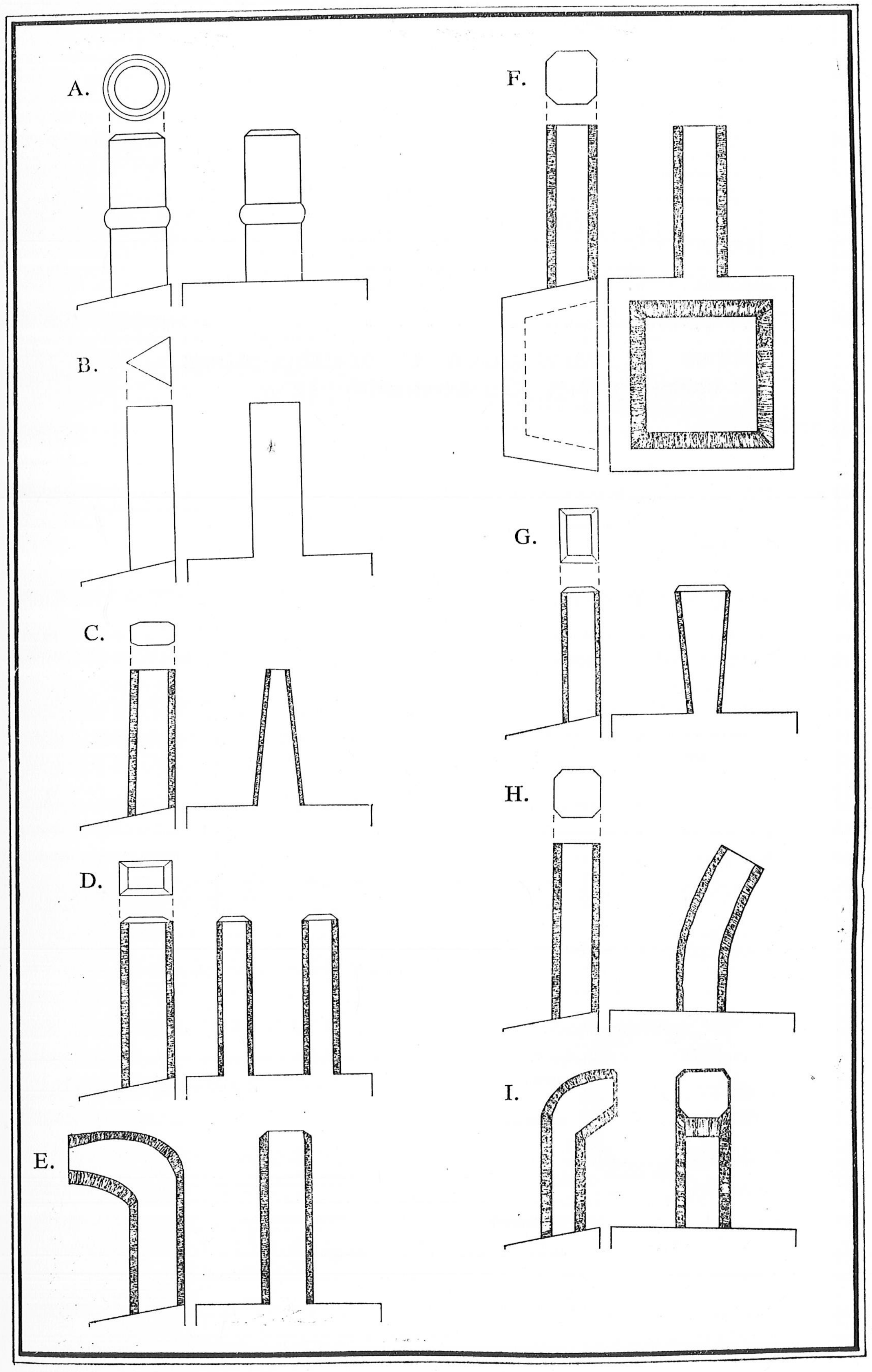


PLATE 25

A: antaryāma-pātram B: antaryāma-pātram C: āśvina-pātram D: ṣoḍaśi-pātram E: atigrāhya-pātram F: upāṃśu-patram G: sārvauṣadha-pātram.

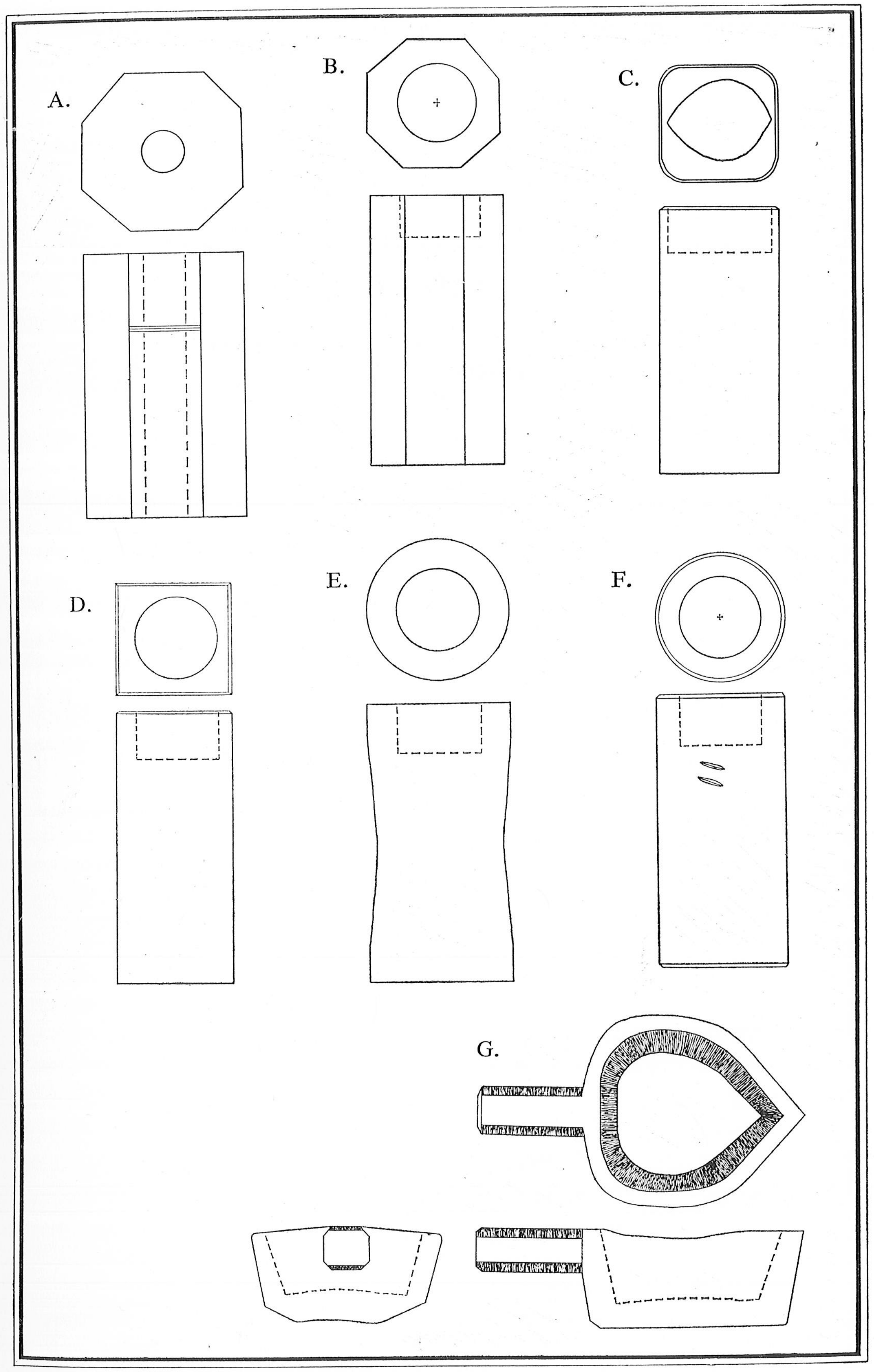


PLATE 26

A: aindravāyava-pātram B: maitrāvaruṇa-pātram
C: ṛtu-pātram D: ratham.

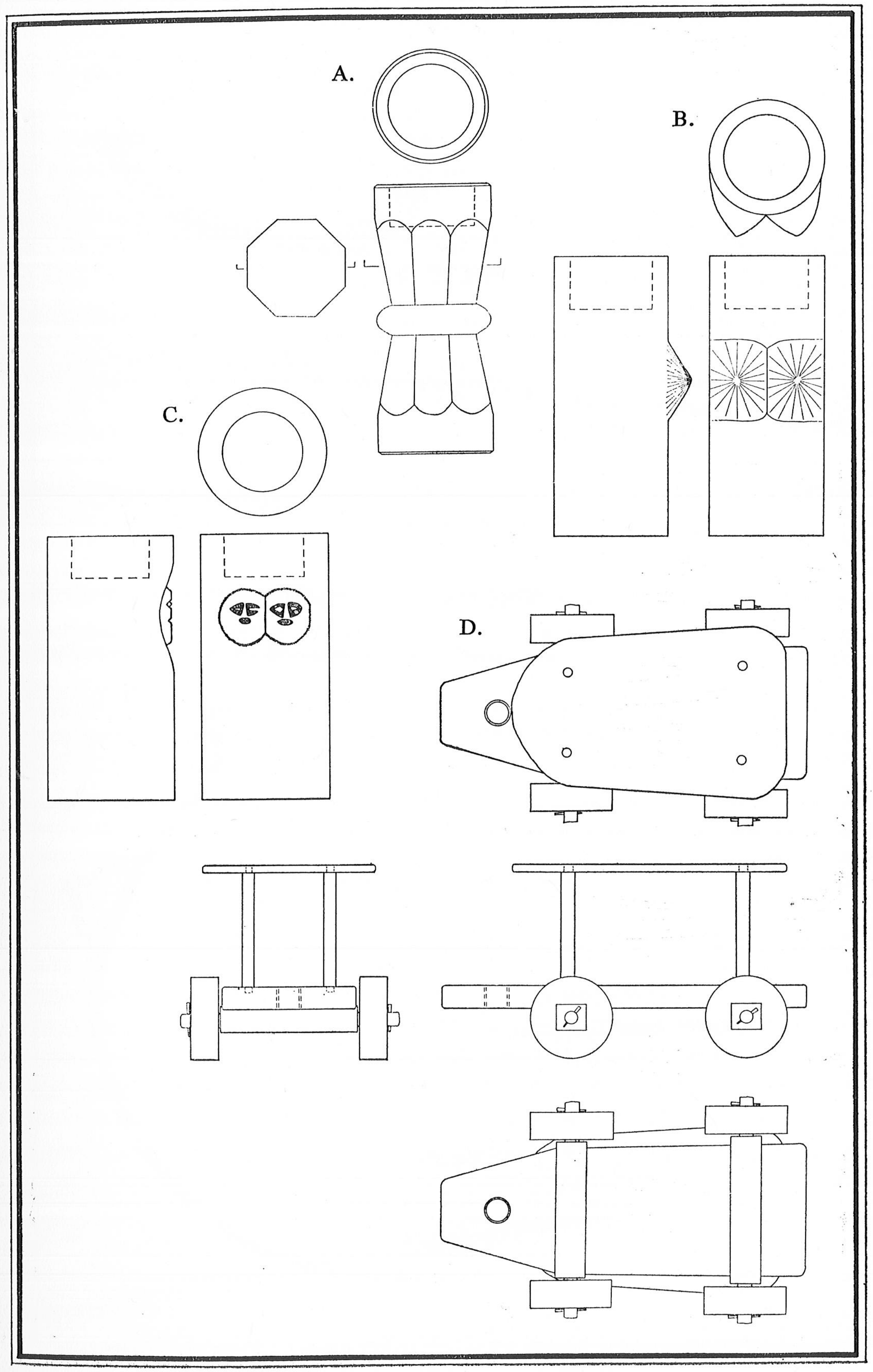


PLATE 27

A: sārvausadha-pātram B: pūtabhṛt.

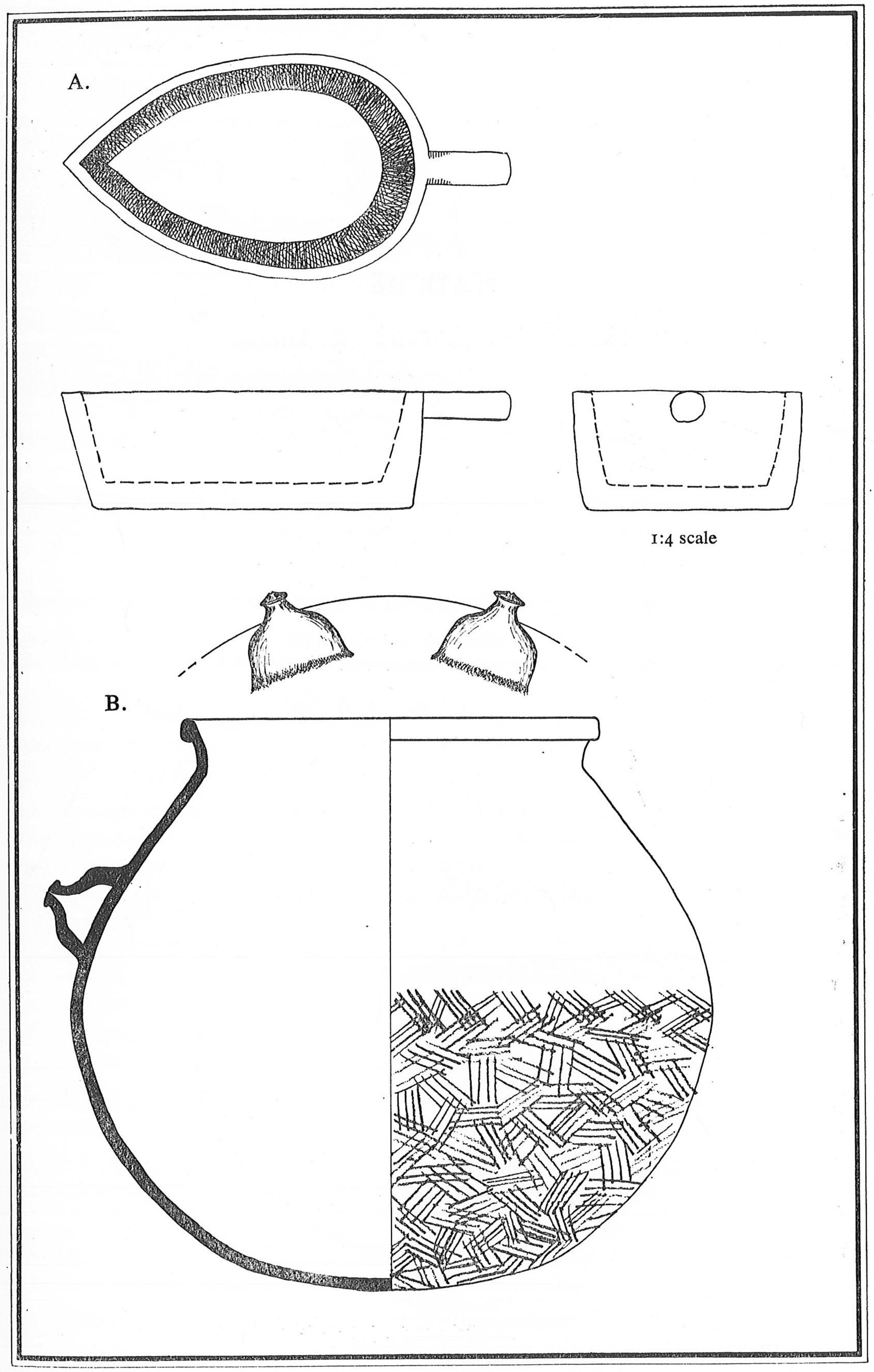


PLATE 28

A–C: three kalams D: mahāvīra E: kuṭam.

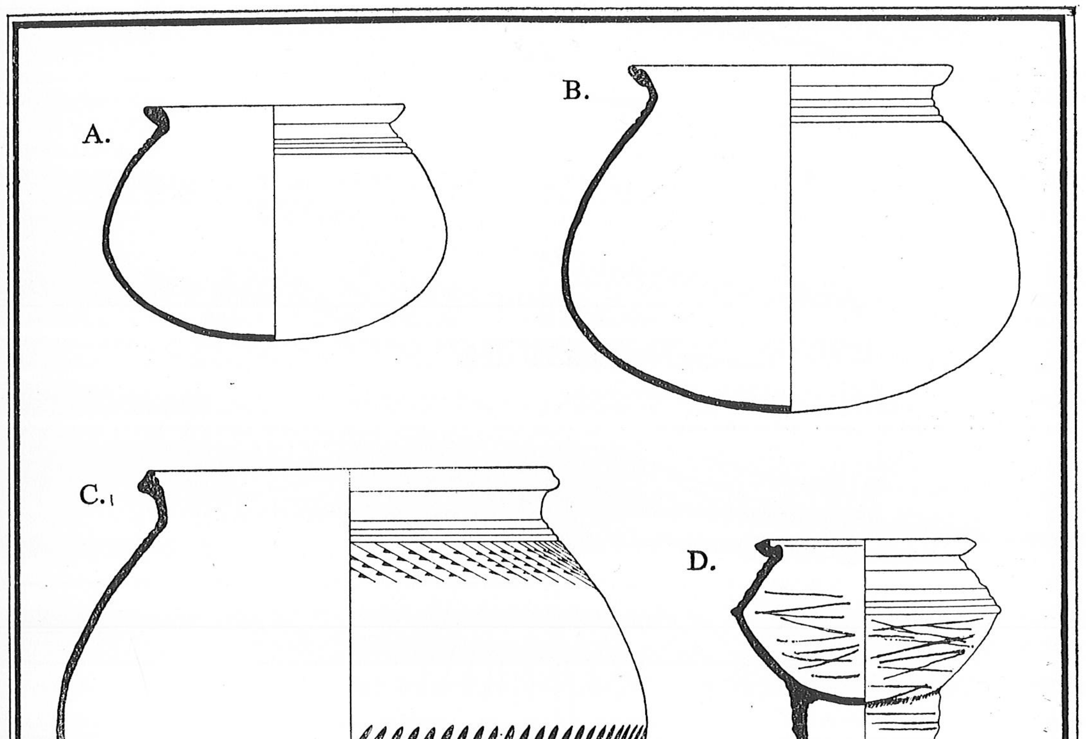


PLATE 29

A: ukhā B: pinvanam.

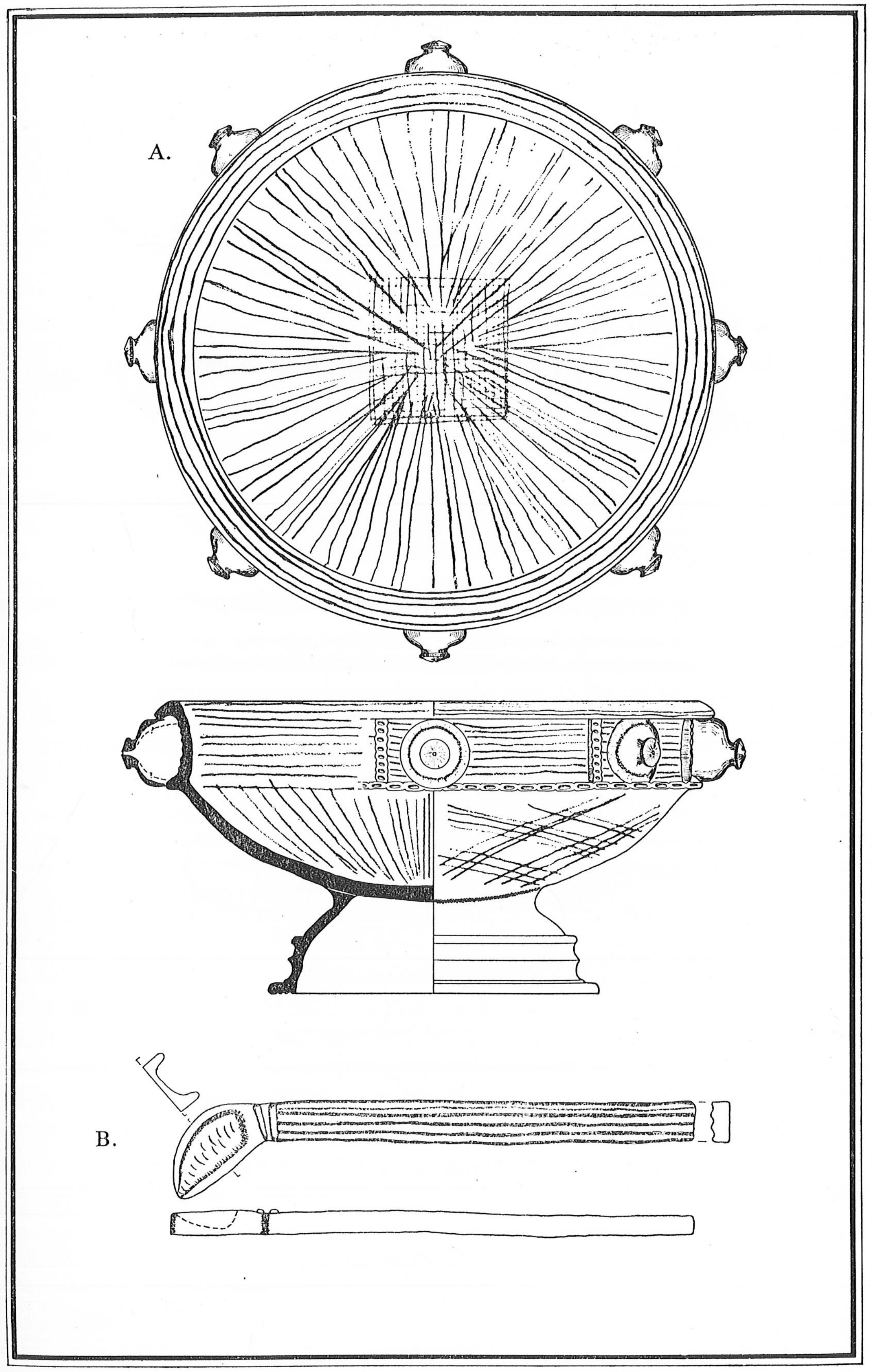


PLATE 30

A–E: five sthālī dishes F: pṛṣṭhodvapanī G–H: two kalams I: dohana J–L: three small sthālī dishes.

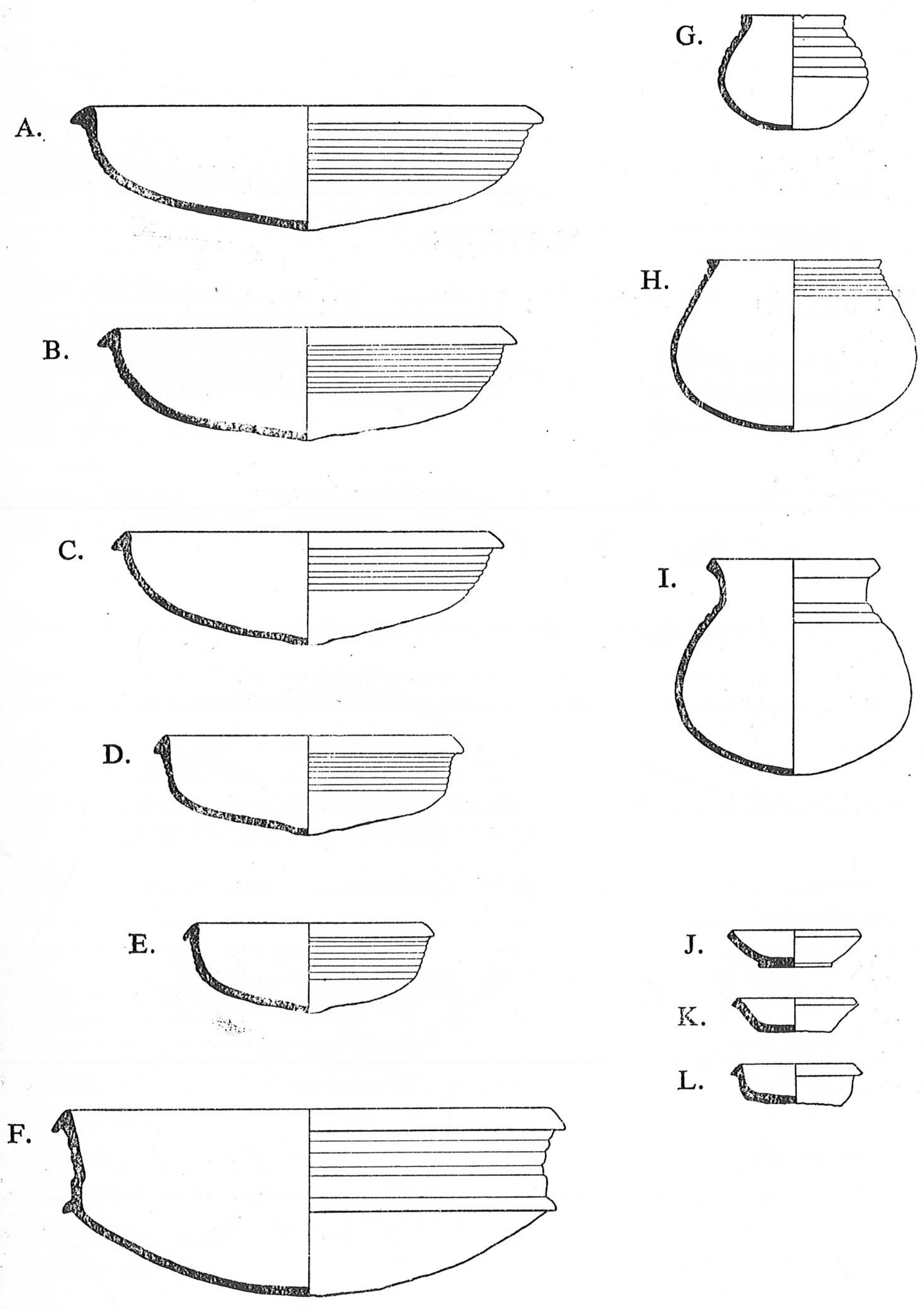


PLATE 31

A: kumbhī B: muḷḷu C: kaṟakam D: kiṇḍi.

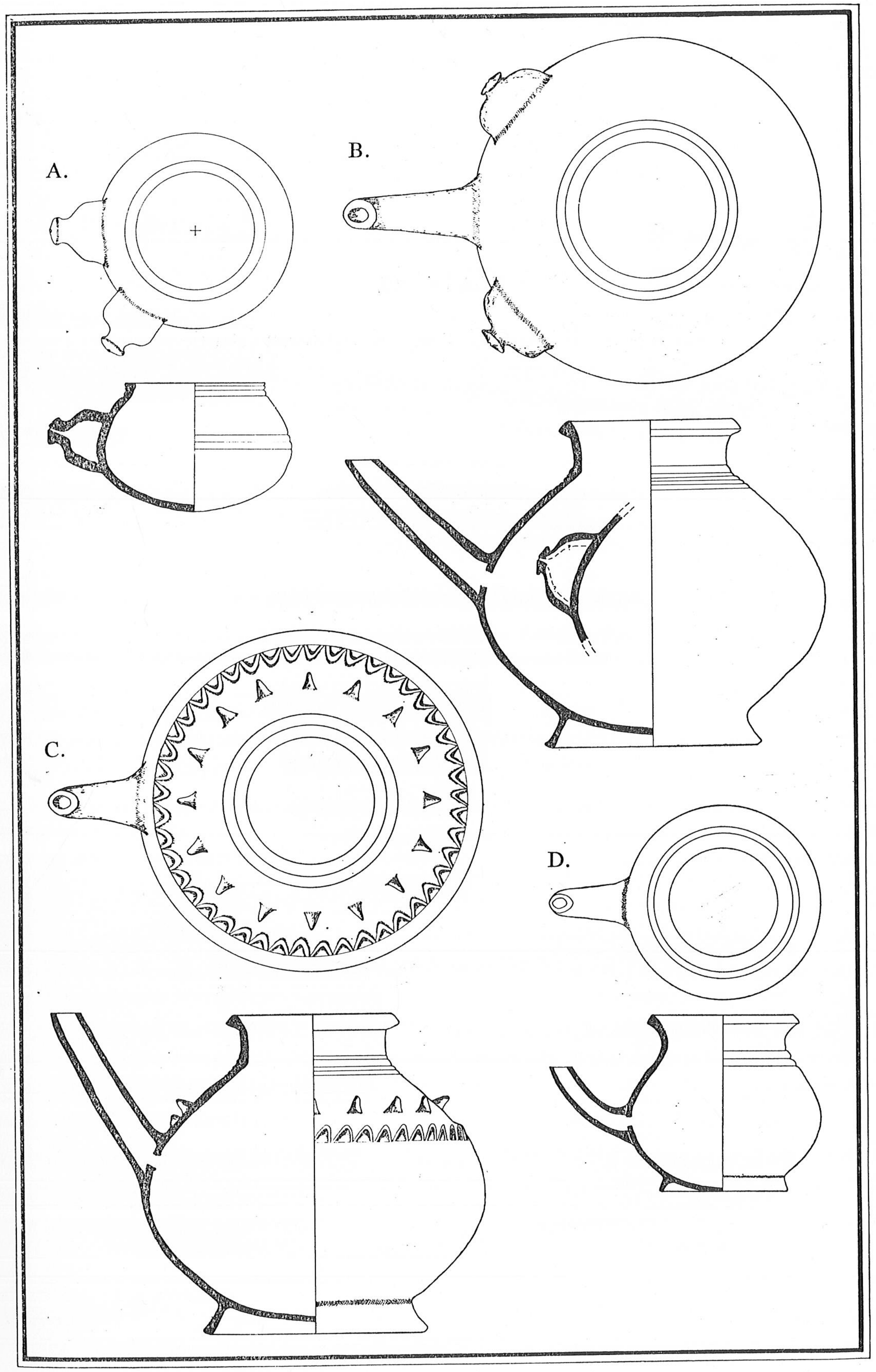
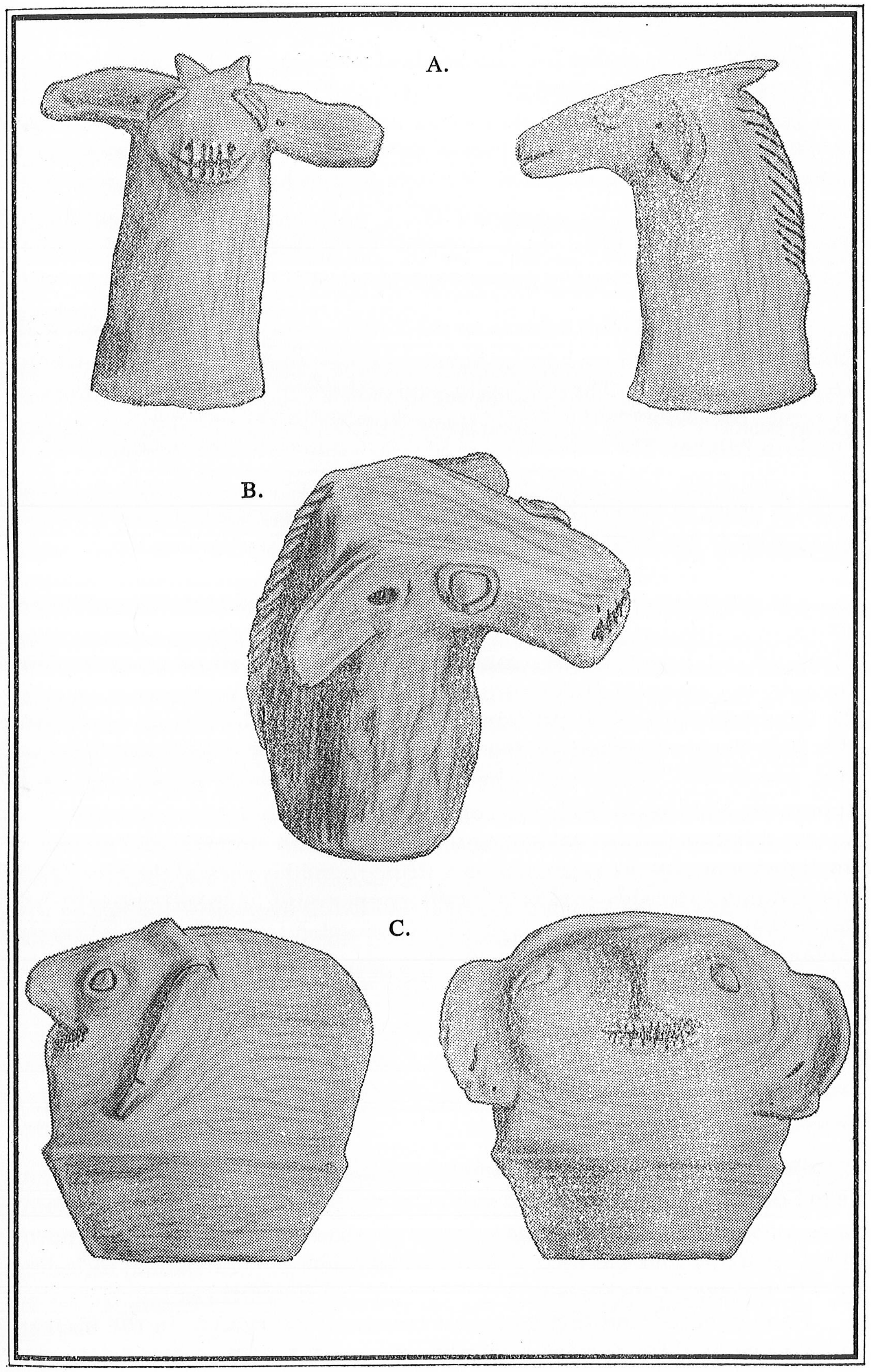


PLATE 32

A: vṛṣṇi (ram) B: aśva (horse) C: puruṣa (man).



PLATES 44, 72A
PLATE 67

The potter also makes five clay heads of a he-goat (basta), bull (vṛṣabha), ram (vṛṣṇi), horse (aśva), and man (puruṣa), and six pairs of male and female pots (kumbha and kumbhī), which will all be buried under the main altar during the ceremonies of the fourth day. The female kumbhi pots have applied breasts but the male kumbha pots do not have penis spouts.

6. The Golden Man

PLATE 33

THE GOLDSMITH WHO belongs to the Taṭṭān caste, makes the golden man (hiraṇmayapuruṣa). Any human figure could be used as a mould, and the size is not important. The goldsmith who assisted in 1975 (and had done so on earlier occasions) had a mould made from an image of Nārāyaṇa from a temple in Palghat. The image is covered with a thin layer of gold and becomes the golden man. Like other representations of Viṣṇu, Nārāyaṇa has four arms. In order to obtain the human form, two of these are removed from the image after it has been detached from the mould. The resulting figure measured about 4 1/2 cm.

The weight of the golden man should be a hundred (*śatamānam*), interpreted as a hundred small golden coins, each called *paṇam*. These coins, which are no longer in use, continue to function in ritual contexts. For example, the Ignorant Brahmin presents the adhvaryu with such a coin on the three occasions of his participation in the ceremonies (below, pages 419, 461, 505). Since a hundred golden coins is expensive, it is permissible to use fifty, twenty-five, twelve and a half, or six and a quarter paṇams. The last option was adopted in 1975.

PLATE 46

In addition to the golden man, the goldsmith prepares the *rukma*, a small disk worn by the yajamāna on a string round his neck at the time of his consecration. He also makes a small copper pipe, approximately 2 1/2 finger breadths long, to be inserted in the wooden toy cart prepared by the carpenter (page 227). The goldsmith may also make the earrings (*kuṇḍala*) customarily worn by Nambudiri Somayājis. The few Somayājis who attended the 1975 ceremonies already owned such earrings.

PLATE 91
PLATES 38A, 54, 55B, 84

7. Other Prerequisites

QUANTITIES OF *darbha* grass and *kuśá* grass are procured from Kaṟalmaṉṉa in South Malabar. Bundles of palāśa leaves and *avakā* plants (Malayalam: *pucakkurŭ*) are similarly obtained. Hemp is used for making strings, in particular the string that ties the yajamāna to the ukhā pot. Firewood, including *samidh* and *idhma* sticks, is brought in sufficient quantity.

PLATE 46

Four hundred and fifty garments (vastram) are bought in the market, ready to be used for dakṣiṇā and other purposes. Fourteen sacrificial goats are ready to be purchased, but the purchase was called off in 1975. Two horses, a donkey, two oxen, and a Soma cow are hired. Another cow and goat are hired for providing milk. Fifty liters of ghee are needed for the libations, as well as quantities of rice and wheat. Coconut oil is needed for the lamps. The feeding of several hundred guests (*brāhmaṇabhojana*) requires large quantities of food (including 2,100 kilograms of rice), kerosene, betel leaves, beedies, cigarettes, snuff, bamboo mats, soap, etc. The reader who wishes to know more may consult the detailed budgets published in the final section of Part III (Volume II, pages 457–463).

PLATE 105

Stones for pounding Soma stalks, and pebbles for outlining the shapes of the altars and for putting under, inside, and on top of the bird-shaped altar, are obtained from an area on the banks of the Bharata Puzha river at Kaṇṇanūr, about one and a half miles downstream from Pattambi. These pebbles are called *kōḻipparal*, "chicken-fish." At least three among them should have holes in them: these are the svayamātṛṇṇa, "naturally perforated ones." Two of these should have (at least) three holes in them, and one (at least) five. Such holes are called *dvāra*. If no pebbles can be found with fully perforated holes, dents or small depressions are acceptable.

PLATE 6

The pebbles from the Bharata Puzha river were analyzed at Berkeley and were found to consist of Vivianite, a scarce mineral named after the British mineralogist J.G.Vivian, who discovered it in Cornwall. It is an Iron Phosphate Hydrate, $Fe_3(PO_4)\cdot H_2O$, often found in beds of clay or in cavities in altered fossils. It is reasonable to suppose that there was a tradition, that pebbles of this type occur in rivers. The ancestors of the Nambudiris must have looked for them, and discovered them in the Bharata Puzha river.

The chicken-fish pebbles are not only used in the Agnicayana. They play a role in other ritual contexts, which throw some light on their post-Vedic and contemporary significance.[1]

Together with seven other substances, the chicken-fish constitute a mixture called *aṣṭabandha*, "eight binding substances," used for cementing the foundation of images installed in temples. The mixture is obtained by combining six parts of *śaṃkha* (Malayalam: *śaṃkhupoṭi* "powdered conch shell"), four parts of *sarja* (*ceñcalyam* "pine resin"), two parts of *abhaya* (*kaṭukkattōṭŭ* "cover of gall-nut"), one part each of *kārpāsa* (*nūtparatti* "cotton"), *apala* (*kōlarakkŭ* "shellac"), *vāluka* (*ceṯṯumaṇal* "sand mixed with clay"), *sajatukā* (*kōḻipparal* "chicken-fish" pebbles), and a half part of *amalakam* (*nellikkā* "gooseberry"). These are powdered, mixed with oil (Sanskrit *taila*, Malayalam *eṇṇa*) and pounded with a hammer for one and a half hours (3 3/4 of a *nāḻika*: see page 245) every morning and evening for thirty days.

The pebbles are also used in connexion with fire. When the *aupāsana* or *gṛhya* "home" fire, installed in the household at the time of marriage, has gone out and has to be reinstalled, the ground is prepared and purified with

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[1] The following information was provided by Māṭampu Narayanan Nambudiri.

PLATE 33A

Fashioning the Golden Man

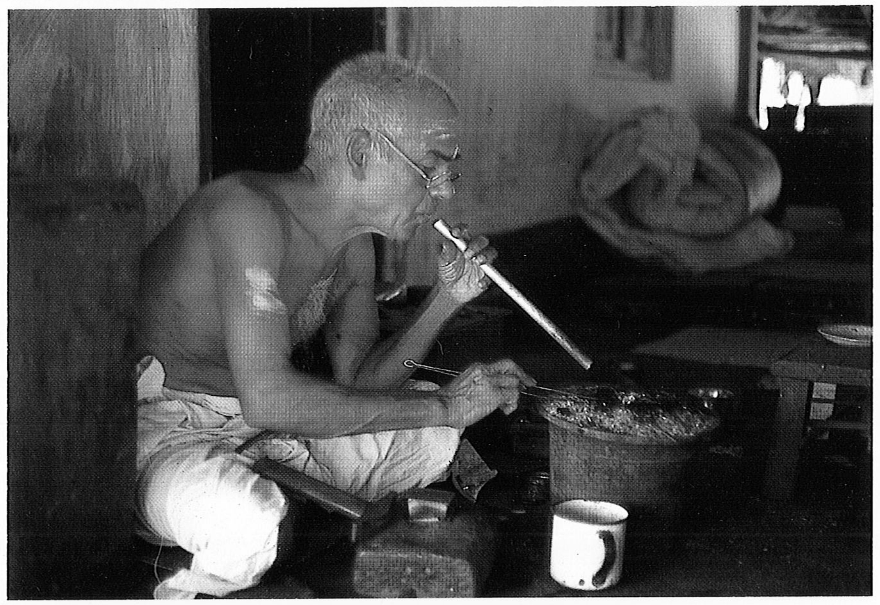
The goldsmith fashions the golden figure of a man, which will be buried under the altar.

PLATE 33B

The Golden Man (Hiraṇmayapuruṣa)

The figure of the golden man is made with the help of a mould taken from an image of Nārāyaṇa in a temple in Palghat. Two of Viṣṇu's four arms are removed to make the figure human. It is about 4 1/2 cm. high, and weights 6 1/4 paṇams, a unit of weight equivalent to a small golden coin.

Photo Michael Beaucage



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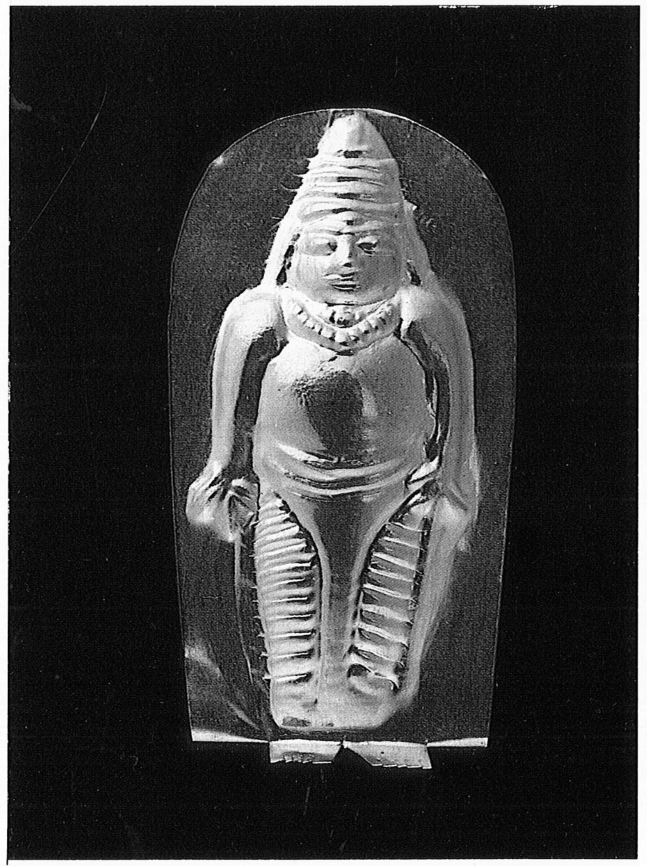


B

a mixture consisting of chicken-fish and various substances, which I list here with their Malayalam names: *maṇal* (river sand from the Bharata Puzha river), *ūṣaram* (desert sand, provided by Tamil brahmins), *puṯṯumaṇṇŭ* (anthill), *nīṟāṟumaṇṇŭ* (mud from a permanently wet spot), *elippūḷi* (sand thrown up by a rat—*eli*—digging a hole), *pannippūḷi* (sand thrown up by a pig—*panni*—digging a hole), *tāmarayila* (lotus leaf), *aśani* (coconut, jack or arayāl tree struck by lightning), a branch with leaves of the arayāl, and various woods: atti, plāś, vahni, and vayyaṅkat (see page 206).

8. The Ritual Enclosure

THE CONSTRUCTION OF the ritual enclosure (*yāgaśālā*) requires precise measurements to have been made beforehand. The measurements are made with the help of the measuring sticks derived from the size of the yajamāna (above, page 196). The results are marked on the chosen ground with the help of pegs and strings.

All measurements can be marked only after determination of the east-west line (*pṛṣṭhyā*). A stick of about two to three feet is prepared, and at its two ends pegs of unequal length are inserted:

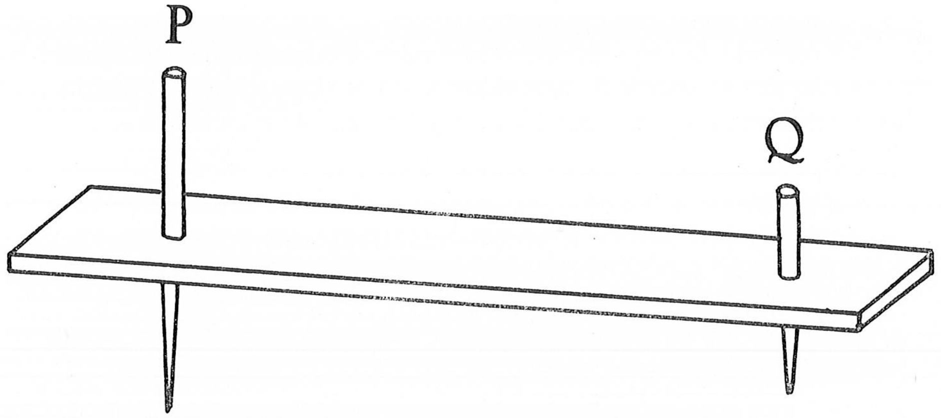


Figure 10—Stick for Tracing a Circle

The longer peg P is fixed in the ground about one foot to the north of where the east-west line is approximately planned. A circle with P as its center is scratched in the soil by turning Q around P (Figure 10; not drawn to scale).

The determination of the east-west line takes four days. At sunrise on the first day the shadow of the central peg at P cuts the circumference at a point A_1, which is marked with a peg. At sunset on that day, it cuts at B_1. Similarly, the shadow cuts the circle at sunrise and sunset on the fourth day at A_4 and B_4, respectively (Figure 11).

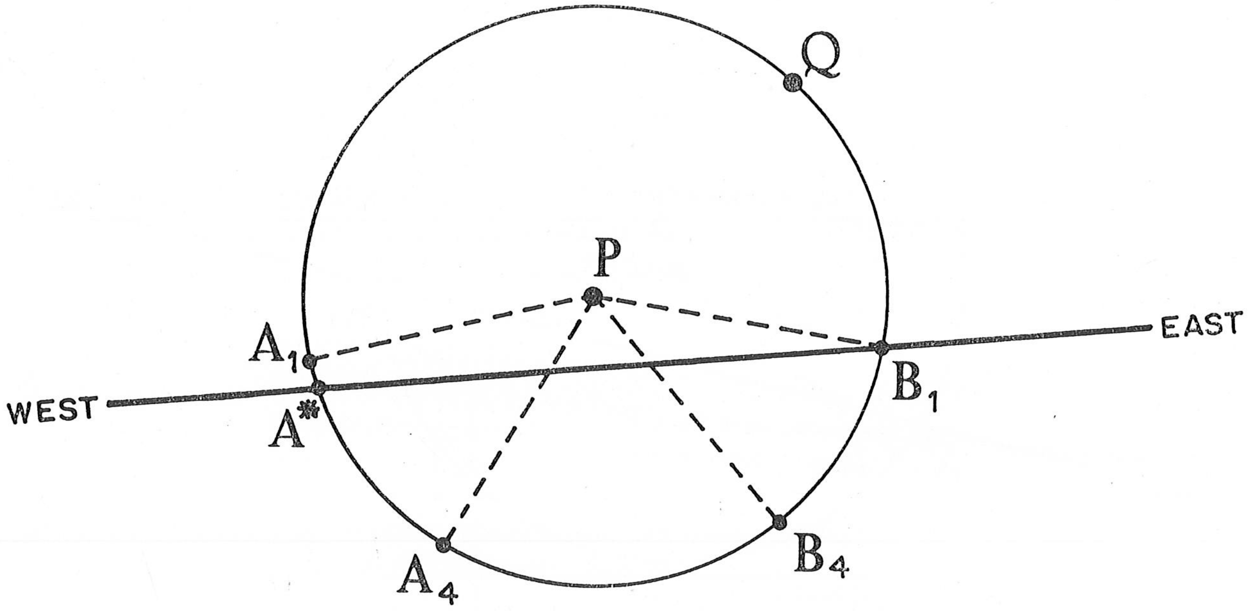


Figure 11—Determination of the East-West Line

One natural day (corresponding to twenty-four hours) is divided into sixty equal units of time, each called a *nāḻika*. Let us assume that the time elapsed between sunrise and sunset on the first day, i.e., between the determination of A_1 and B_1, was twenty-three nāḻikas. Four days last $4 \times 60 = 240$ nāḻikas. During that period, the distance between A_1 and A_4 was traversed. The arc A_1A_4 is divided into 240 equal units, of which as many parts are taken as there were nāḻikas between sunrise and sunset on the first day, viz., twenty-three. This is done by folding a thin string of the same length as the arc A_1A_4 into 240 equal parts, and unfolding twenty-three parts. The point arrived at on the arc, say A^*, is marked with another peg.

Now A^*B_1 is the east-west line. A string is tied and extended further in opposite directions on both sides.

There is another method, simpler and rougher, to determine the east-west line. A circle is drawn as before (Figure 12). Let A_1 and B_1 mark the points of sunrise and sunset on the first day, and A_2 sunrise on the second day. The center A^* of segment A_1A_2 is determined by folding a string of length A_1A_2. Now A^*B_1 is the east-west line.

In practice, the east-west line is not often constructed by either of these methods. Generally there will be a temple or *mana* (Nambudiri house) nearby, and these are already oriented. The directions are then obtained by constructing parallels.

Given the east-west line, there are two different methods to arrive at the north-south line, or in fact at any line at right angles to a given one. Ac-

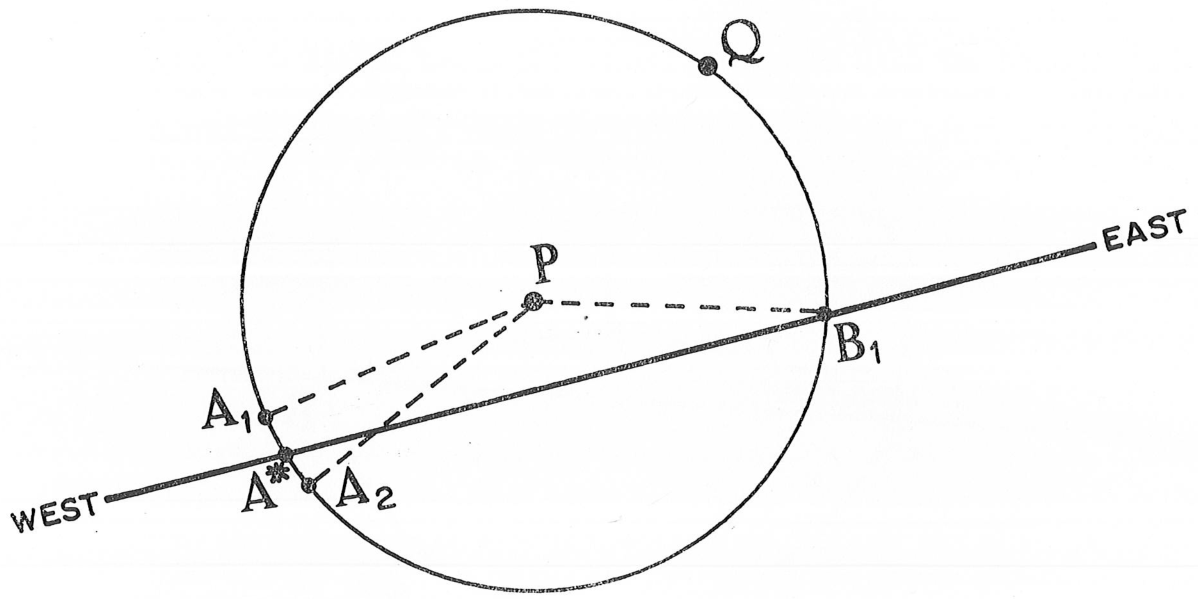


Figure 12—Determination of the East-West Line: Alternative Method

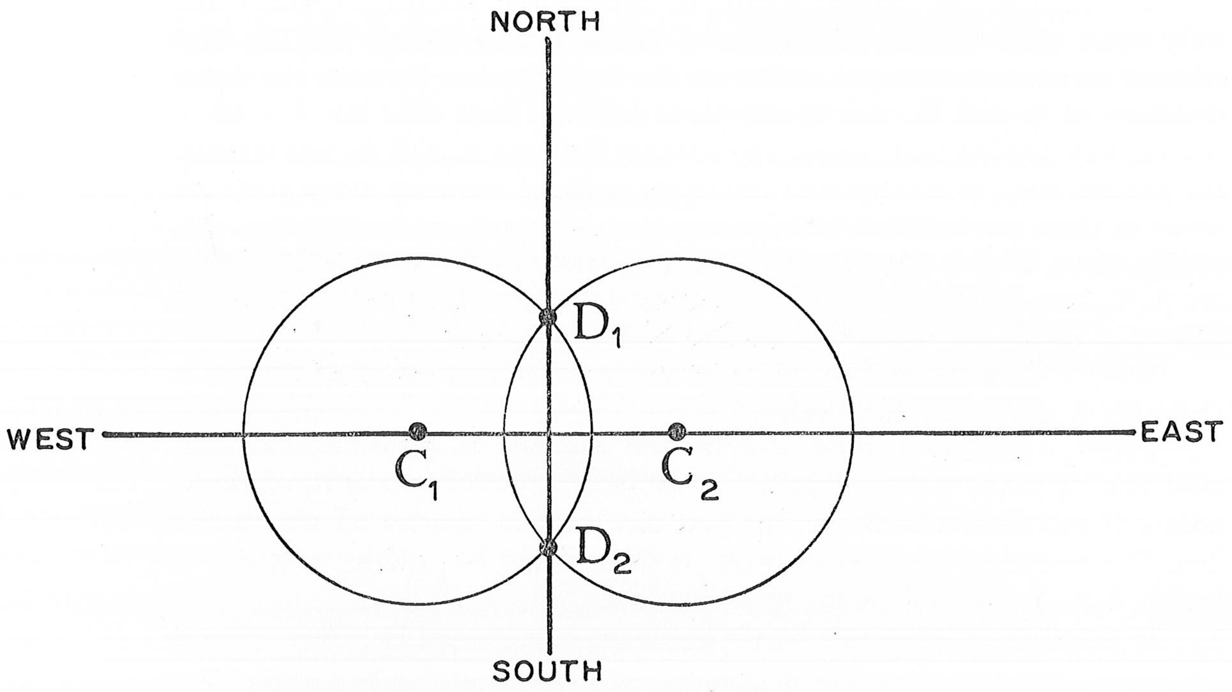


Figure 13—Determination of the North-South Line: First Method

cording to the first method, two circles are drawn with centers C_1 and C_2 on the east-west line, at equal distances to the left and the right of the point where the north-south line is wanted (Figure 13). The two circles intersect at D_1 and D_2. Then D_1D_2 is the north-south line.

According to the second method, a point C is marked on the east-west line where the intersection with the north-south line is wanted. A peg is fixed at C, and another at D, three prakramas to the east of C (Figure 14).

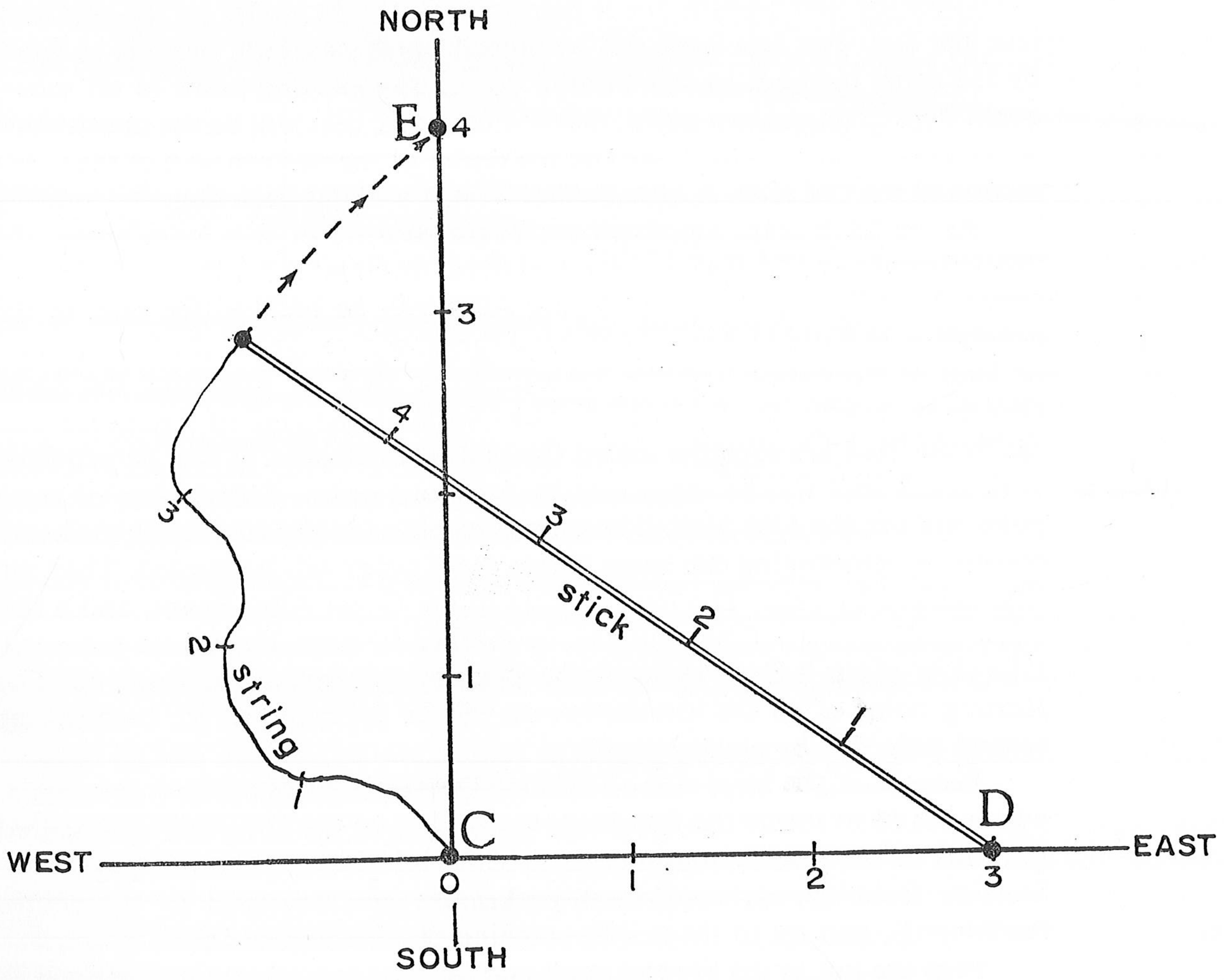


Figure 14—Determination of the North-South Line: Second Method

A string four prakramas long is tied to C, and a stick five prakramas long to D. The opposite ends of the string and stick are tied together, and then the string is stretched. This determines a point E, such that CE is the north-south line. Alternatively, DE is also a string, and both strings are stretched and made to meet. Or else there is a single string, CED, that is marked at E, and E is moved until both CE and DE are fully stretched.

Such right angles are generally constructed with the help of the triple (3, 4, 5). But other triples are also sometimes mentioned, e.g., (17, 17, 24), with regard to which "a slight difference" is felt to exist. The Nambudiris know the technical terms in Sanskrit for the three sides of the rectangular triangle: the two sides CE and CD are called *bhūjam* and *kōṭi*, and the hypotenuse DE is called *karṇ[ṇ]am*.

Once the north-south line is determined at right angles on the east-west line, the east-west line itself can be moved north or south, parallel to itself, by the same method, to any desired point. The starting point of all subsequent measurements is a point, marked by a peg, that will be the intersection of the pṛṣṭhyā or east-west line and the center of the western wall of the wife's section of the Old Hall. A little further west, a well has been dug.

As we have seen, the ritual enclosure consists of two main areas: the prācīnavaṃśa or Old Hall and the mahāvedi or Great Altar Space. Inside the Great Altar Space, the new Offering Altar will be built to the east, in the agnikṣetra or Field of Agni. To its west there are two special sheds: the sadas or Hall of Recitation and the havirdhāna or Hall for Preparing the Soma Oblations, briefly: the Soma Hall. The Old Hall, the Hall of Recitation and the Soma Hall are together called the śālā or Enclosure. It will be provided PLATE 34 with roofs that will be supported by forty-one poles. Twenty-two of these poles are for the Old Hall. The measurements for the sacrificial enclosure consist in determining the spots where these poles will be erected. They are first marked by pegs. The four corners of the Great Altar Space, and a few other spots on its outline, will also be marked by pegs, though no poles will take their place. I shall indicate the pegs by numbers ① through ㊺. The starting point of all the measurements will be indicated as ②, because the second pole will be erected there.

Because of the large size of the new Domestic Altar of the Agnicayana, which has to fit inside the Old Hall, the outline of the Old Hall is measured in terms of the madhyama-prakrama of 32 1/4 viral (see above, page 196). Starting from ②, six madhyama-prakramas are measured to the south, reaching ①, and six to the north, reaching ③. See Figure 15.

Pegs are put in the ground at ② and ③. The measurements continue as follows:

from ③ four madhyama-prakramas east, reaching ④;
from ④ two madhyama-prakramas east, reaching ⑤;
from ⑤ four madhyama-prakramas south, reaching ⑥;
from ⑥ two madhyama-prakramas south, reaching ⑦;
from ⑦ six madhyama-prakramas south, reaching ⑧.

Then ①③⑤⑧ is the outline for the *patnīśālā* or Wife's Enclosure, with

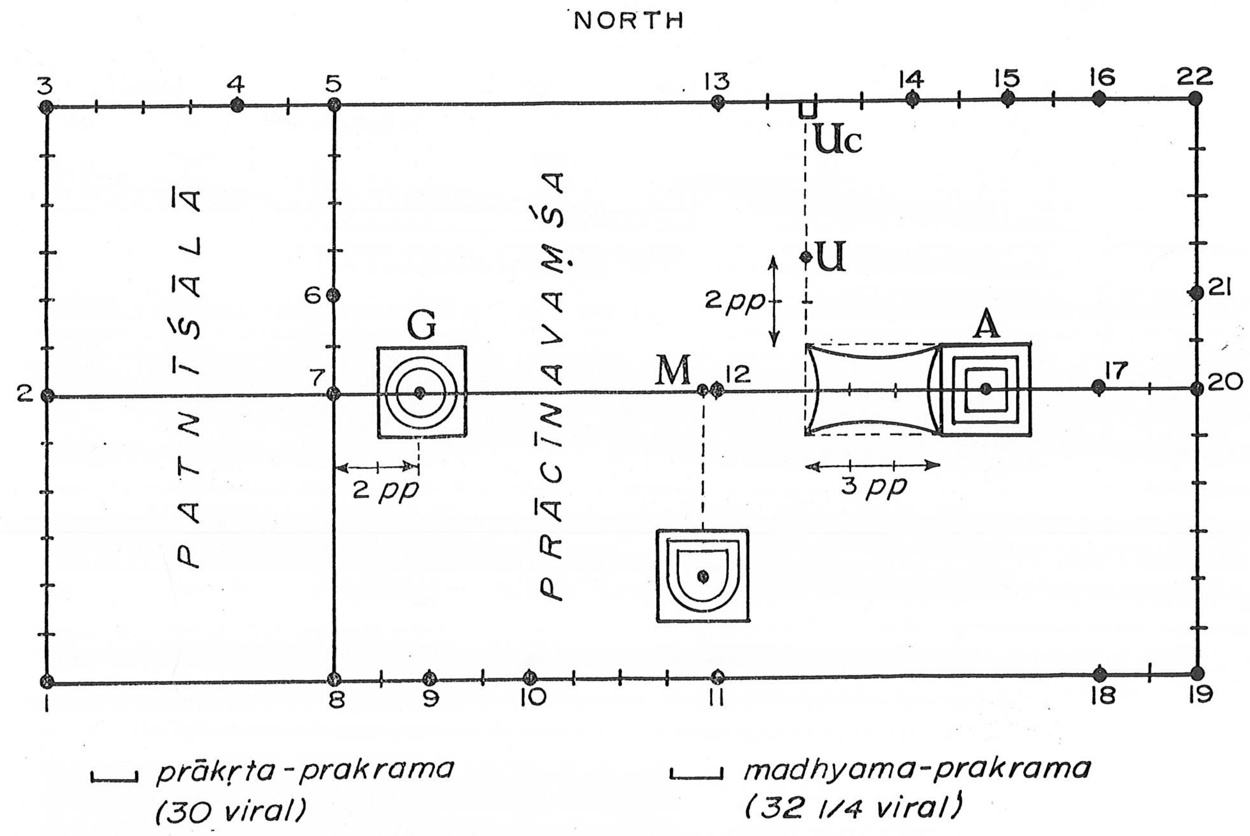


Figure 15—Dimensions of the Old Hall (Prācīnavaṃśa)

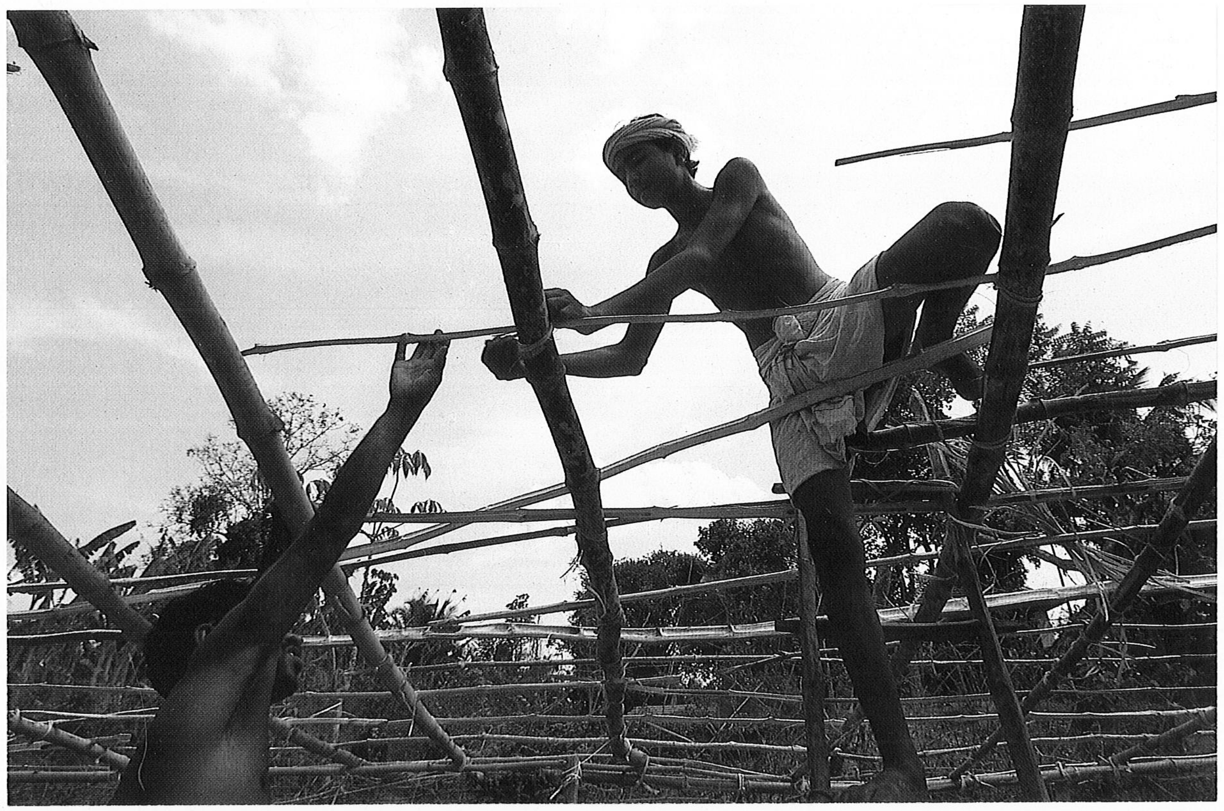
spaces for doors marked by the segments ④⑤ and ⑥⑦. Next comes the Old Hall itself:

from ⑧ two madhyama-prakramas east to ⑨;
from ⑨ two madhyama-prakramas east to ⑩;
from ⑩ four madhyama-prakramas east to ⑪;
from ⑪ six madhyama-prakramas north to ⑫;
from ⑫ six madhyama-prakramas north to ⑬;
from ⑬ four madhyama-prakramas east to ⑭;
from ⑭ two madhyama-prakramas east to ⑮;
from ⑮ two madhyama-prakramas east to ⑯;
from ⑯ six madhyama-prakramas south to ⑰;
from ⑰ six madhyama-prakramas south to ⑱;
from ⑱ two madhyama-prakramas east to ⑲;
from ⑲ six madhyama-prakramas north to ⑳;
from ⑳ two madhayma-prakramas north to ㉑;
from ㉑ four madhyama-prakramas north to ㉒.

PLATES 34A-B

Making the Roof

The roof of the sacrificial enclosure is made from palmyra leaves, fastened onto a framework of bamboo poles, tied together with strings. This method is commonly used for constructing temporary structures, sheds, or "pandals."



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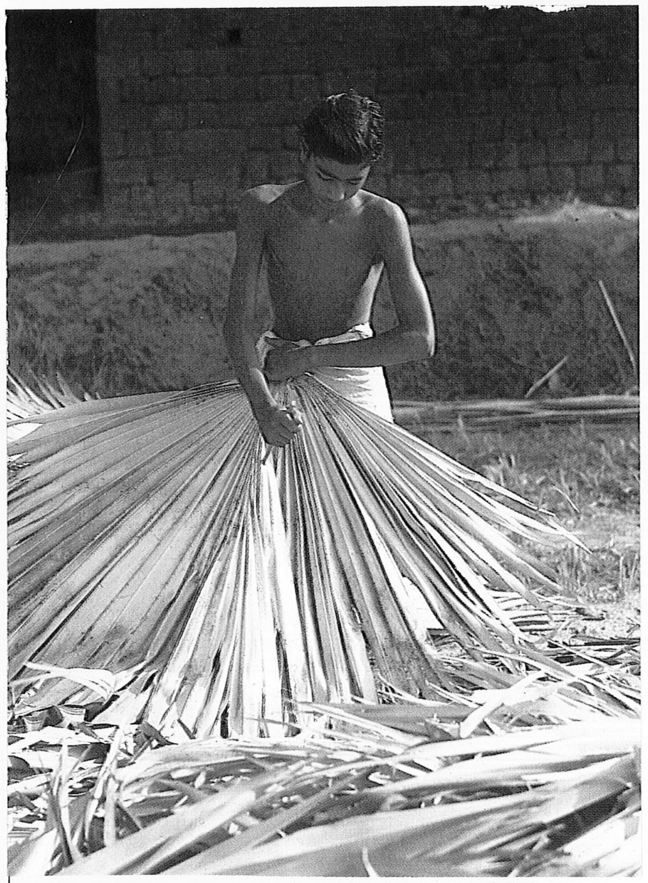


B

This completes the outline of the Old Hall, ⑤⑧⑲㉒, with spaces for doors marked at ⑥⑦ (previously), ⑨⑩, ⑭⑮, and ⑳㉑. Later, bamboo poles will be erected in these spots and support a saddle-shaped roof made from palmyra leaves, with its ridge above the east-west line ②⑳ at an elevation of about 12 prakramas above the ground. A low wall of clay is made, with removable upper parts that may serve as windows.

PLATES 35, II:21

Next the location and sizes of altars and other special areas inside the Old Hall will be determined by measurement, after which they will be made from clay. For all measurements *within* the Old Hall, the unit of measurement is the ordinary *prākṛta-prakrama:*

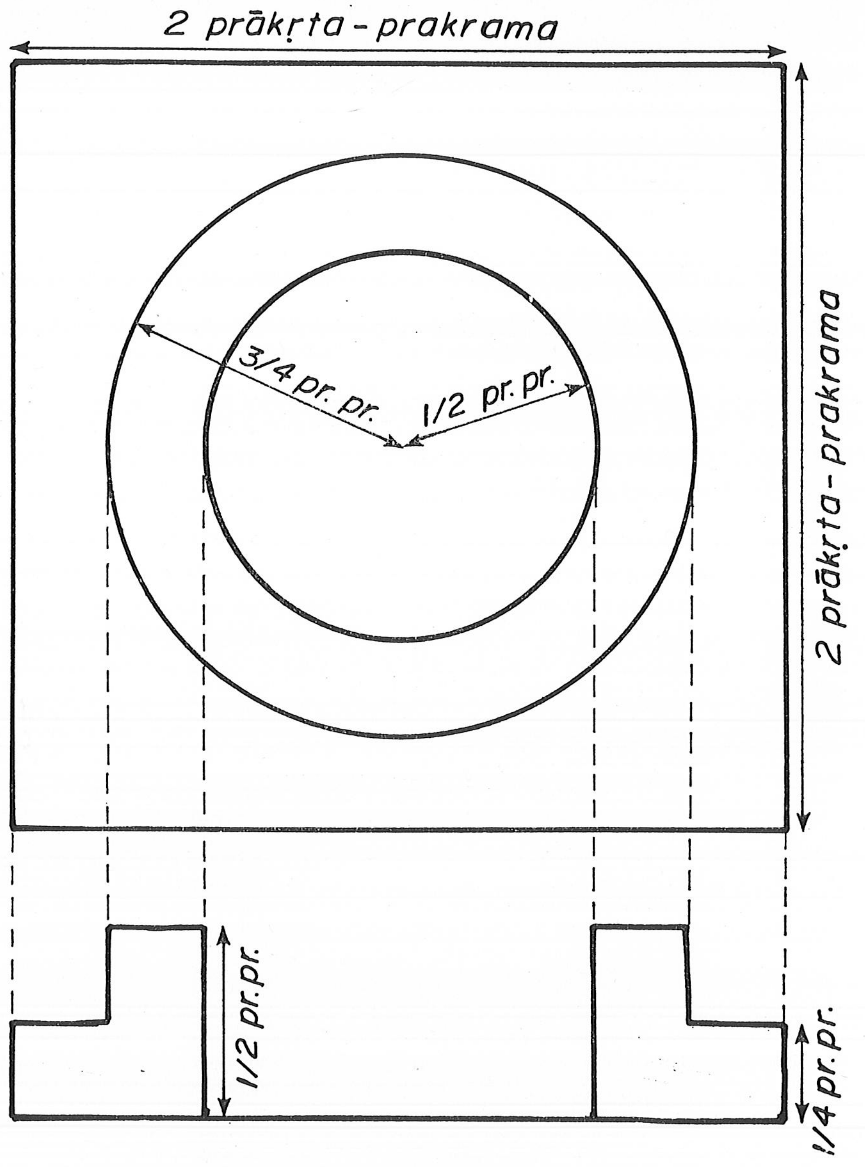


Figure 16—Dimensions of the Domestic Altar (Gārhapatya)

I. The (old) Domestic Altar (gārhapatya), marked G. This altar occupies a square of 2 × 2 prakramas, with two concentric circles inside, the smaller one with a radius of 1/2, the larger one with a radius of 3/4 prakrama. The outer circle is elevated from the ground at about 1/4 prakrama and the inner circle at about 1/2 prakrama. The inside of the altar is on a level with the outside ground. See Figure 16.

The center of this Domestic Altar is two (ordinary) prakramas east of 7.

II. The (old) Offering Altar (āhavanīya), marked A. The outer dimensions are the same as those of the Domestic Altar. Inside are two squares, as indicated in Figure 17.

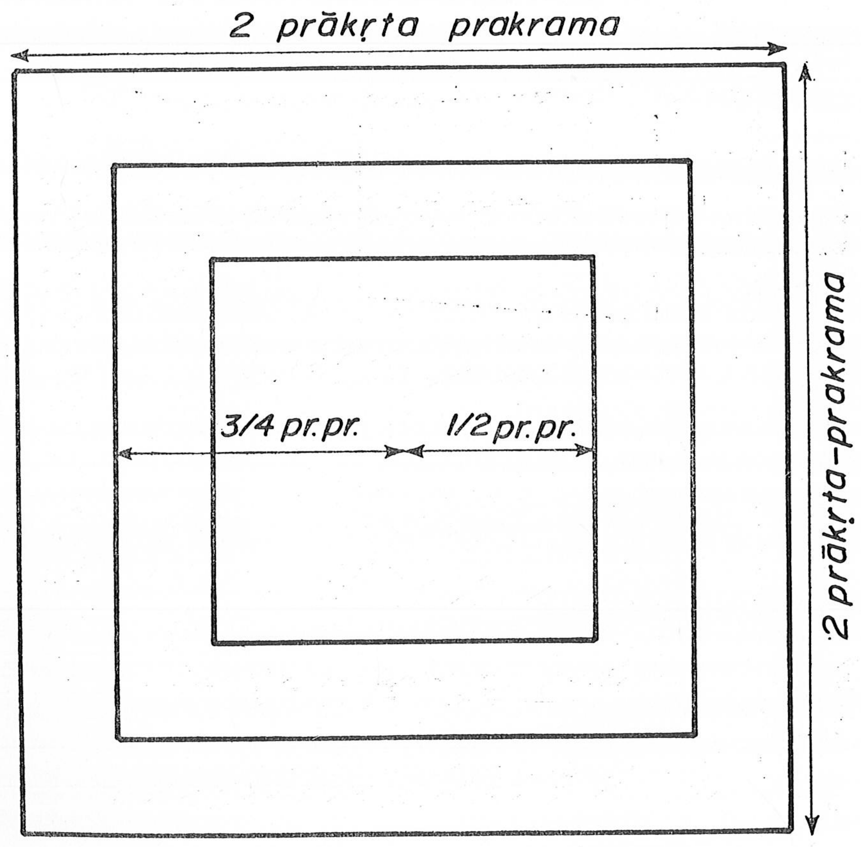


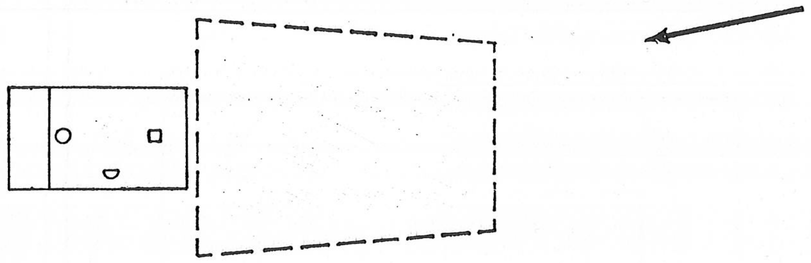
Figure 17—Dimensions of the Offering Altar (Āhavanīya)

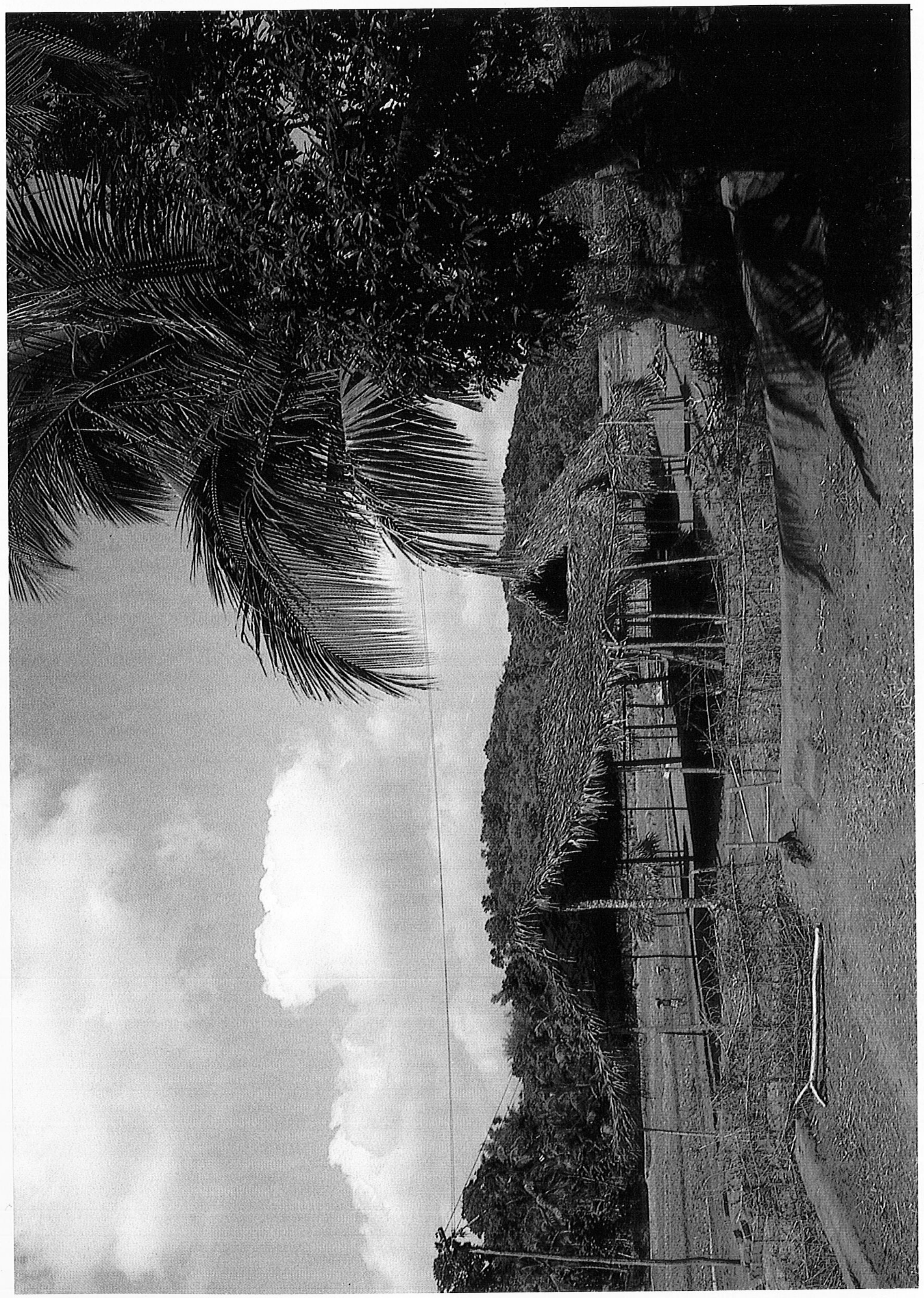
The center of this Offering Altar is 12 (ordinary) prakramas and 18 viral east of the center of G. The distance from the center of A to ⑰ is 2 (ordinary) prakramas and 18 viral. Therefore, the total distance from ⑦ to ⑳ is:

PLATE 35

The Ritual Enclosure

Overview of the ritual enclosure from the east-northeast. The Great Altar Space (mahāvedi) is in front, the Old Hall (prācīnavaṃśa), with higher roof, in the back. See also Volume 2, Plate 21.





⑦ to center of G: 2 prākṛta-prakramas =	60	viral
center of G to center of A:	378	viral
center of G to ⑰:	78	viral
⑰ to ⑳: 2 madhyama-prakramas =	64 1/2	viral
TOTAL:	580 1/2	viral

This is as it should be, for the east-west dimension of the Old Hall is eighteen madhyama-prakramas, or 18 × 32 1/4 = 580 1/2 viral.

III. The Southern Altar (dakṣiṇāgni), marked D. The outer square is again of the same dimensions. Inside there is a rectangle to the north and a semicircle to the south. The dimensions are indicated in Figure 18.

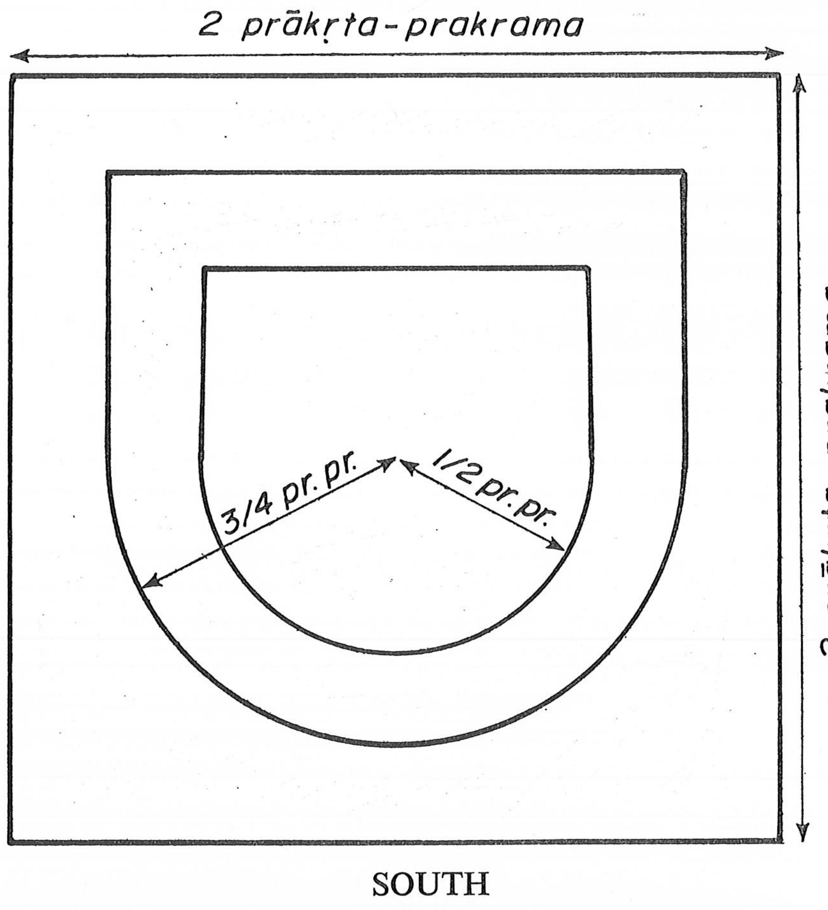


Figure 18—Dimensions of the Southern Altar (Dakṣiṇāgni)

To find the center of the Southern Altar we first determine the center M of the distance between the centers of G and A: it is 6 prakramas and 9 viral from each. The center of D is 4 prakramas and 6 viral south of M.

PLATE 36A Immediately west of the Offering Altar is the Vedi. It has the shape of an hourglass. The four corners form a rectangle which is 2 prakramas broad and 3 prakramas long. These corners are determined by measurement, but the hourglass shape is scratched on the ground with the sphya knife, using eye and hand.

Two ordinary prakramas north from the northwest corner of the Vedi a point U is reached, which will mark the position of the *utkara* rubbish heap, PLATE 36B which will later be made from clay in the shape of a turtle. Another 3 prakramas and 7 1/2 viral north marks the spot where the *ucchiṣṭakhara* will be made. This is a small square, made against the northern wall, with an exhaust through the wall to the outside. It is a receptacle for water that will be used to wash some of the Pravargya utensils (Episode 9).

The need for the use of the middle prakrama as the unit of measurement for the outline of the Old Hall is not apparent, of course, from the sizes of the three altars, but it will become apparent when the new domestic altar is constructed on the fourth ritual day (Episode 7). PLATE 37

Next the outline of the mahāvedi or Great Altar Space is measured. Use is made of the extended, vṛddha-prakrama of 34 1/3 viral (above page 195), so that the large bird-shaped altar will fit inside.[1] All the measurements *inside* the mahāvedi will again be made by means of the ordinary prakrama. The ordinary prakrama is also used to find the starting point (Figure 19).

The measurement of the mahāvedi or Great Altar Space begins from a point A, six ordinary prakramas east from the center of the Sacrificial Altar (A).The peg that is placed there is called Peg in Front of the Enclosure (*śālāmukhīyaśaṅku*). The sadas or Hall of Recitation is measured first:

from A one (ordinary) prakrama east, then:
    one (ordinary) prakrama south to ㉔;
  and one (ordinary) prakrama north to ㉕;
from ㉔ six (ordinary) prakrama south to ㉓;
from ㉕ six (ordinary) prakrama north to ㉖;
from ㉖ five (ordinary) prakrama east to ㉗;
from ㉗ eight (ordinary) prakrama south to ㉘;
from ㉘ six (ordinary) prakrama south to ㉙;
from ㉙ five (ordinary) prakrama east to ㉚;
from ㉚ six (ordinary) prakrama north to ㉛;
from ㉛ two (ordinary) prakrama north to ㉜;
from ㉜ six (ordinary) prakrama north to ㉝.

This completes the outline of the Hall of Recitation ㉓㉖㉝㉚, with spaces

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[1] Erkkara Raman Nambudiri visited a performance of the Puṇḍarīka (a sattra ritual) in Andhra Pradesh in 1977. He reported that the priests not only read the recitations and chants from books, and generally without accent or proper pitch, but also that ordinary measurements had been used for the Great Altar Space so that the bird-shaped altar had to be made small, even though the yajamāna was not a midget.

PLATE 36A

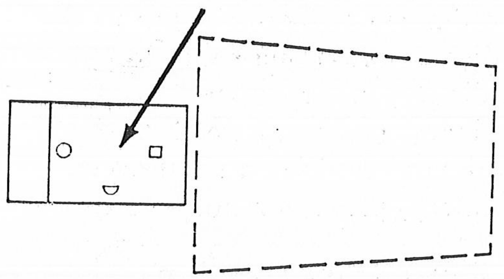
Digging the Vedi

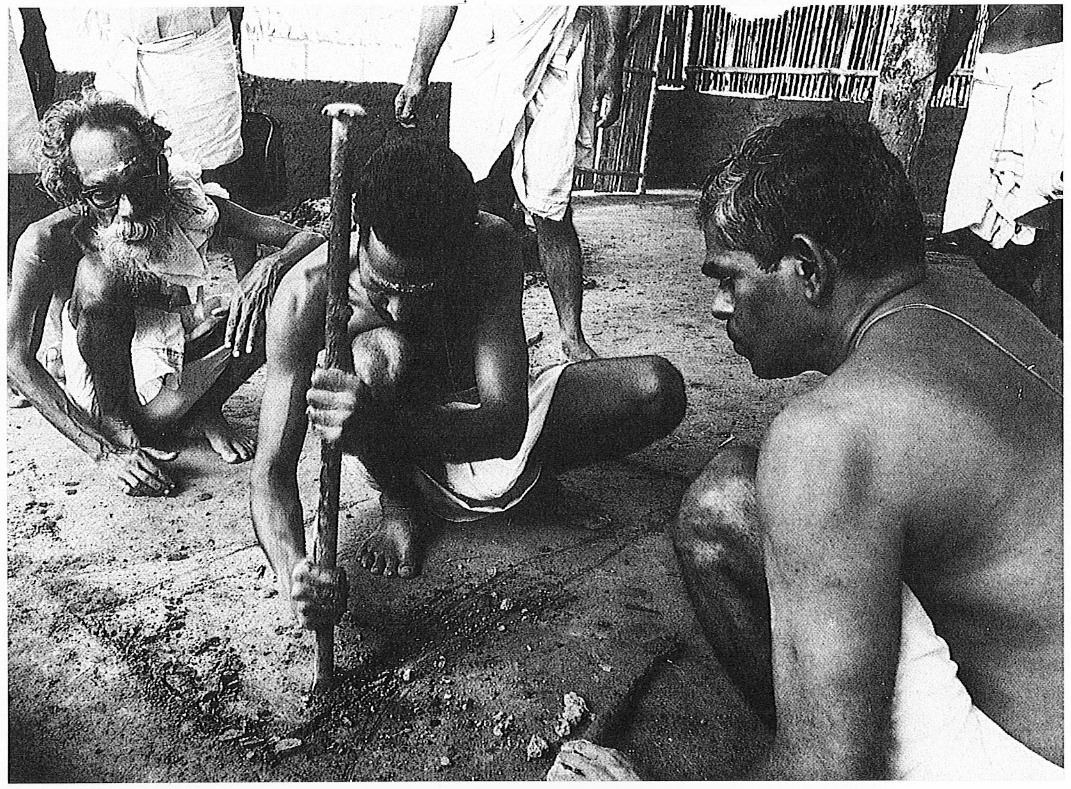
The vedi is a receptacle for ritual implements, constructed immediately to the west of the offering altar. Its shape is that of an hourglass, with four concave sides. The ancient Śulba Sūtra texts specify these sides as arcs from four circles, and determine the center and radius of each of these circles. The Nambudiris determine only the position of the four corners by precise measurement (see Figure 15). They construct the four sides by using eye and hand. The plate shows the agnīdh scratching the outline of the vedi on the ground with the help of the wooden knife (sphya).

PLATE 36B

Preparing the Utkara

The utkara rubbish heap is used not only as a receptacle for soil and dust, but also as a place to stand on for the agnīdh and several other priests. It is fashioned in the shape of a turtle.





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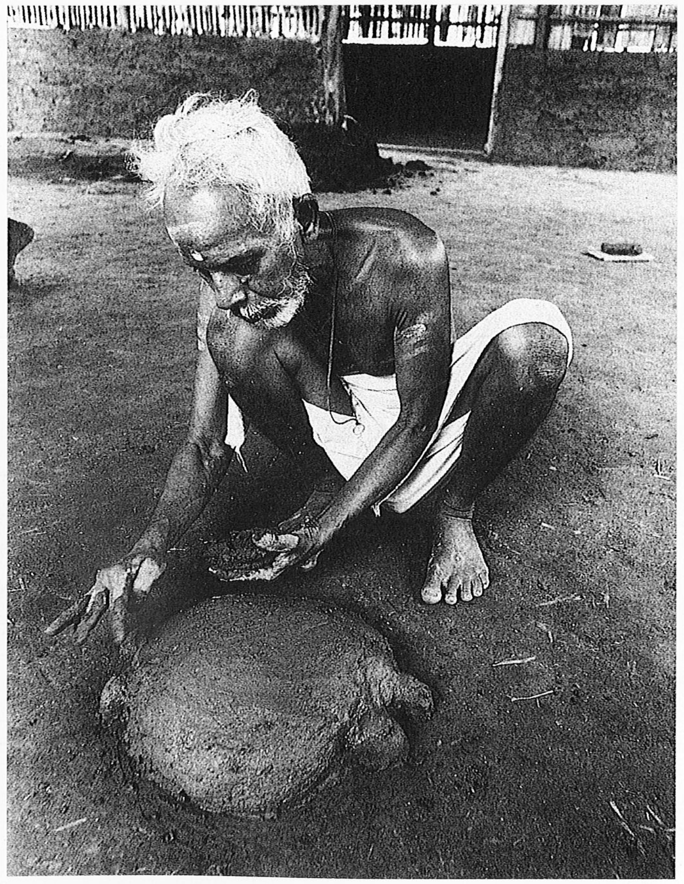


B

PLATE 37A

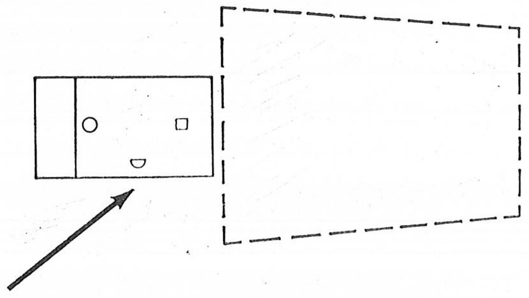
The Southern and Old Offering Altars

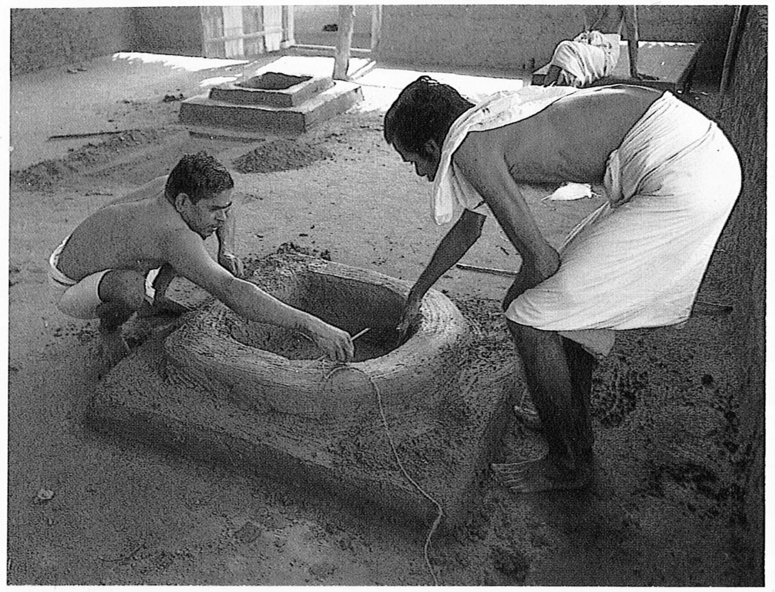
Inside the Old Hall (prācīnavaṃśa), the Southern Altar (dakṣiṇāgni: in front) is semicircular. When fire is installed on it, it will be used for protection against evil influences emanating from the southern direction. The old offering altar (āhavanīya: in the background) is square. It is the altar for the offering fire, into which many oblations will be made. The preparation of both altars from clay has just been completed.

PLATE 37B

The Southern and New Domestic Altars in Use

Weeks later, after the ceremonies have begun, fires are installed on the altars. The old offering altar, made from clay, has been replaced by a new domestic altar, made from bricks (see Plate 47). The new offering altar, in the shape of a bird, will be constructed later and further to the east, outside the Old Hall.





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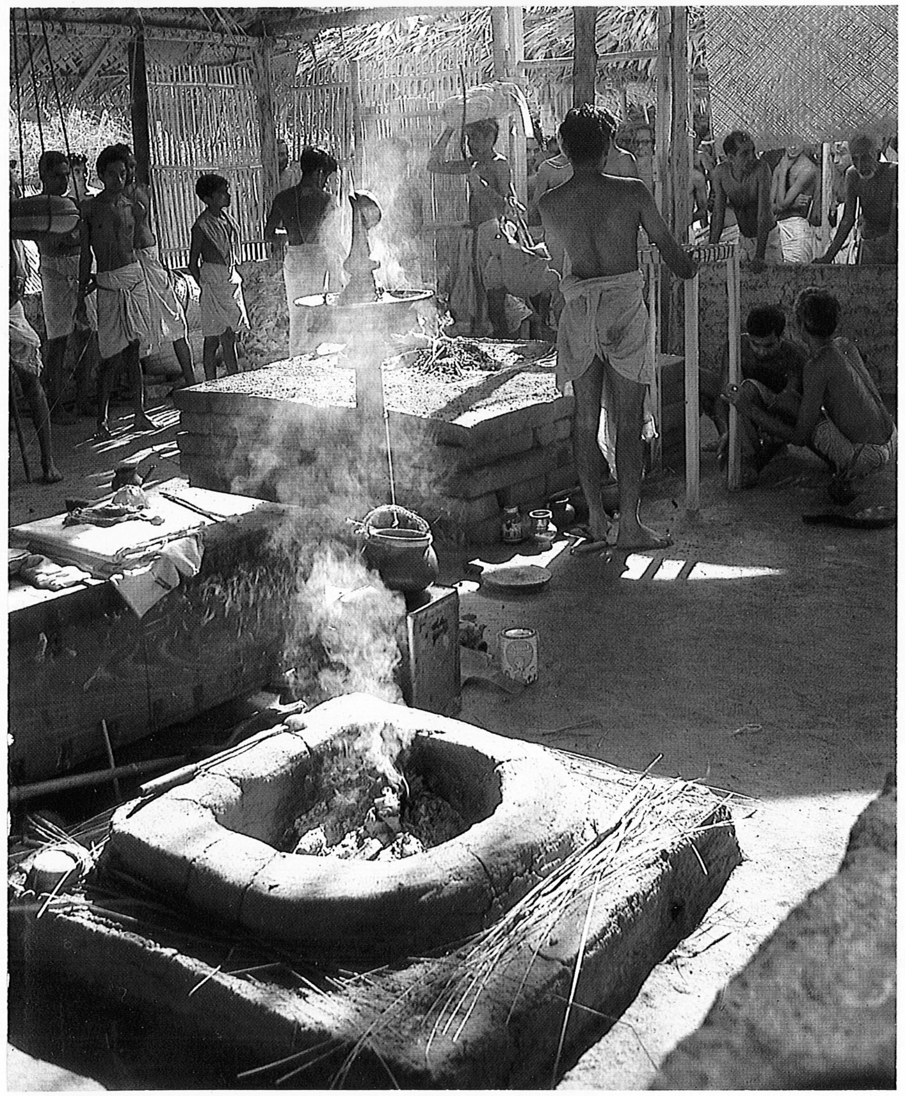

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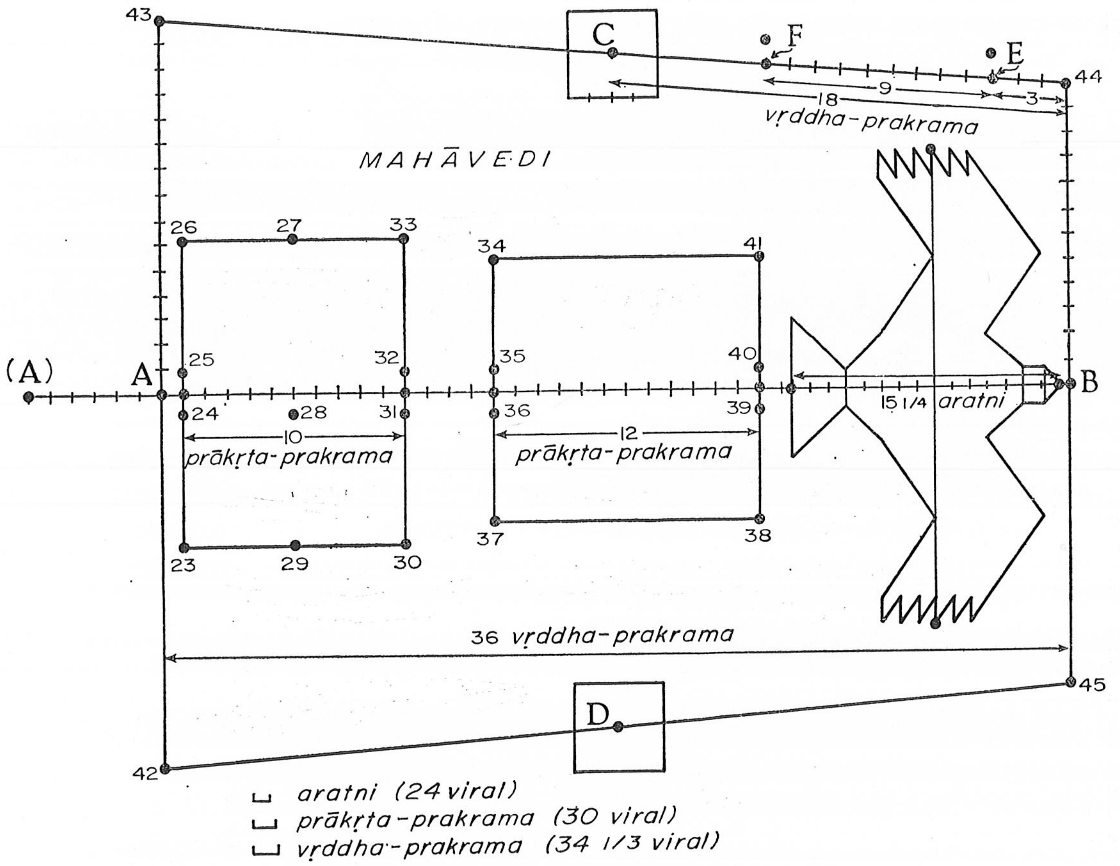


Figure 19—Dimensions of the Mahāvedi

for doors at ㉔㉕ and ㉛㉜.[1] Four ordinary prakramas to the east of the eastern side of the Hall of Recitation is the western side of the Soma Hall, a square of twelve by twelve prakramas, with outline ㉞㊲㊳㊶ and spaces for doors at ㉟㊱ and ㊴㊵.

The outline of the Great Altar Space is marked with the help of the extended vṛddha-prakrama unit of measurement of 34 1/3 viral (above, page 196):

from A, fifteen vṛddha-prakrama south to ㊷;
from A fifteen vṛddha-prakrama north to ㊸;
from A thirty-six vṛddha-prakrama east to B;

---

[1] This description and Figure 19 represent the measurements of the sadas as it was constructed in 1975. However, a mistake was made: according to Ceṛumukkŭ as well as Taikkāṭ, the sadas should measure 18 aratnis from north to south (not 14 prakramas).

from B twelve vṛddha-prakrama north to ㊹;
from B twelve vṛddha-prakrama south to ㊺.

This completes the outline of the Great Altar Space ㊷㊸㊹㊺. From ㊹ and ㊺, 18 vṛddha-prakrama west along the outline in the direction of ㊸ and ㊷, respectively, we reach two points, C and D, respectively. C will be the middle of the *āgnidhrīya* shed, a square of four by four ordinary prakramas. Similarly, D will be the middle of the mārjālīya shed, another square of the same dimensions, half inside and half outside the Great Altar Space. Again, going west from ㊹ along the northern boundary of the Great Altar Space, we reach E after three vṛddha-prakramas and F after another nine. One vṛddha-prakrama north of E, the *cātvāla* hole will be dug; one vṛddha-prakrama north of F, the outer utkara rubbish heap will be made.

Next, poles will be erected in all the spots marked by pegs, except for ㊷–㊺ and ㉘. In the last hole, the audumbarī pole will be erected on the ninth day of the ceremony (Episode 23). Simple, saddle-shaped roofs are built over the Old Hall, the Hall of Recitation, the Soma Hall, the Field of Agni, and a small cow-shed (*gośālā*) south of the wife's quarters (*patnīśālā*). In 1975, two more sheds with roofs were built to the south of the enclosure: a shed for sound equipment and crew, south of the (old) Offering Altar, and a shed for visiting foreign scholars, south of the Field of Agni (see Volume II, page 744 and Figure 32).

Now the agnikṣetra and uttaravedi have to be measured. As if three different units of measurement were not enough, a fourth, the aratni or pañcami, is used. The measurements of the bricks of the bird-shaped altar have been in terms of aratni (see above, page 195), and so the bricks will fit in the outline. However, the entire altar would not have fitted inside the mahāvedi if the extended measure of the vṛddha-prakrama had not been used. Starting point for the measurements is the intersection of the east-west line and the eastern side of the havirdhāna: from there, 1 1/2 ordinary prākṛta-prakramas to the east a new beginning point is reached, which I shall again denote as A. This point marks the western end of the tail of the new āhavanīya or offering altar, built in the shape of the bird (Figure 20; cf. Figure 7, etc.)

From A, we go four aratnis north and four aratnis south reaching B and C, respectively. BC is the western side of the tail of the bird. From A, three aratnis east reaching D, and from D, one north and one south, reaching E and F, respectively, complete the tail BEFC. From D, two further east, reaching G, we reach the ātman of the bird. From G, three north and three south we reach H and I, respectively; and from G, H and I six east we reach J, K, and L, respectively. Thus the entire ātman HKLI has been determined. Its center is at M. From M, seven and a half aratnis north we reach N, and a further six north we reach O; in southern direction we similarly reach P and Q.

From O we move in one-aratni steps west, marking R, S, and T; and

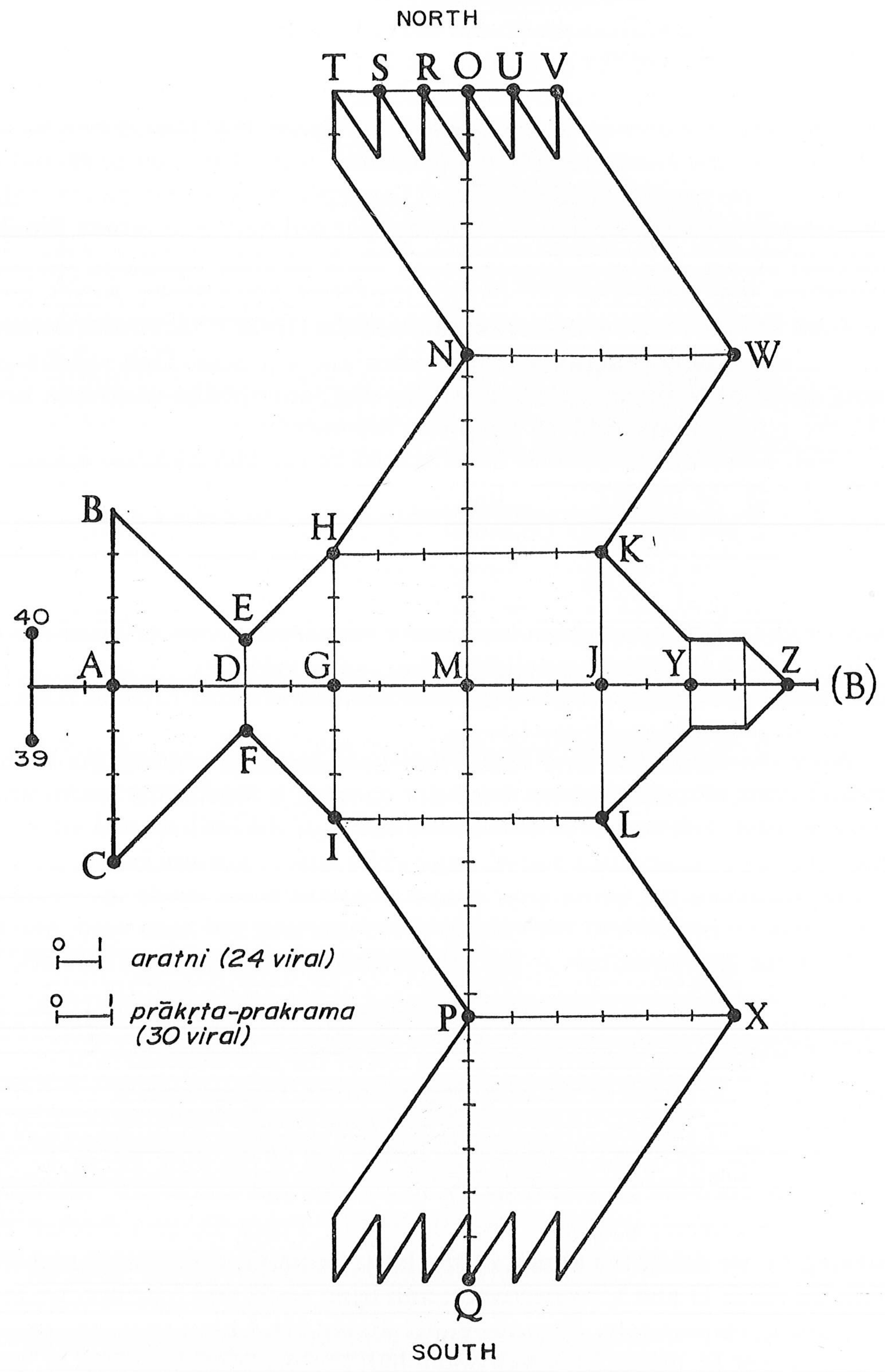


Figure 20—Dimensions of the Bird-Shaped Altar

east, marking U and V. Now V, U, O, R, T mark the six tips of the left or northern wing. One and a half aratni south the inner sides of the tips are marked. The same operation is gone through at the southern side, starting from Q. From N and P, moving six aratnis east, we reach W and X, respectively: the shoulders (*aṃsa*). This completes the outline of the wings.

Now only the head is left. From J, two aratnis east, reaching Y, determine the neck; and another one and a quarter plus one = two and a quarter east, reaching Z, complete the head, the other steps being obvious from Figure 18. Finally a string is tied along all the outer pegs, marking the outline of the bird.

A distance of half an ordinary prakrama remains between Z and the eastern side of the mahāvedi (B in Figure 19), where the sacrificial pole will be erected on its intersection with the pṛṣṭhyā line.

Now let us check these measurements inside the mahāvedi, going east along the pṛṣṭhyā line and starting from A in Figure 19:

to sadas:	1	prakrama
sadas:	10	prakramas
to havirdhāna:	4	prakramas
havirdhāna:	12	prakramas
to bird:	1 1/2	prakramas
	28 1/2	prakramas = 28 1/2 × 30 = 855 viral

Continuing east from A in Figure 20:

tail:	AD	3	aratnis
body:	DY 2 + 6 + 2 =	10	aratnis
head:	YZ	2 1/4	aratnis
		15 1/4	aratnis = 15 1/4 × 24 = 366 viral
Remaining:	1/2 prakrama = 1/2 × 30 =		15 viral
		TOTAL:	1,236 viral

This is as it should be, for the east-west dimension of the mahāvedi is thirty-six vṛddha-prakramas, or 36 × 34 1/3 viral = 1,236 viral.

The sacrificial enclosure is now ready for use. After its consecration, the enclosure can only be entered by Nambudiri brahmins.

9. Dramatis Personae

PLATES 47, 48, 53, 91A, 98A

PLATES 18, II: 12–13

THE 1975 PERFORMANCE OF the Atirātra-Agnicayana was largely organized by two Nambudiri brahmins: Cherumukku Vaidikan Vallabhan Somayājipad, a Kauṣītaki Ṛgvedin of the Cherumukku Vaidikan family, and Brahmaśrī Muṭṭatukkāṭṭu Itti Ravi Nambudiri, a Jaiminīya Sāmavedin, who also assumed the role of udgātā. The reader will be familiar with the work of these two men. Both have collaborated with the present author in the preparation of this volume, and there are few pages that do not carry the imprint of their vast knowledge and experience in all matters pertaining to the Vedic tradition.

PLATES 38B, 55B

Erkkara Rāman Nambudiri, doyen of Nambudiri Vedic scholars, gave his support and assistance and was present throughout the ceremonies. He also assumed the role of Sadasya. Erkkara is one of those almost legendary scholars that India, throughout the centuries, has continued to produce. His name is a household word among students of the Vedas all over the world, for he recited the Kauṣītakibrāhmaṇa to its editor, E. R. Sreekrishna Sarma.

PLATES 1, 38A, 52

PLATES 38A, 50, 60B, 71, 91B, 93

Continuous assistance at the ritual was furthermore given by the two Nambudiris who performed Agnicayana in 1955 and 1956, viz., C. V. Vasudevan Akkitiripad, Cherumukku Vaidikan's eldest son, and the Sāmavedin Nellikat Nīlakaṇṭhan Akkitiripad.

PLATES 2, 4, 46, 51, 60A, 61A, 62, 65, 69, 80 etc.

PLATE 45 B, 62

Cherumukku Vaidikan's third son, C. V. Nīlakaṇṭhan Somayājipad (now Akkitiripad) was yajamāna; his wife Pārvatī was yajamānapatnī. Cherumukku Vaidikan's fifth son, C. V. Kṛṣṇan Nambudiri, was adhvaryu, and his sixth son, C. V. Śrīdharan Nambudiri, was maitrāvaruṇa. Two of Cherumukku Vaidikan's grandsons were potā and neṣṭā. The acchāvāka was also related to the Cherumukku Vaidikan family. The pratihartā was the son of Nellikat Nīkalaṇṭhan Akkitiripad, and the prastotā and subrahmaṇya belonged to the same family. The pratiprasthātā and unnetā were brothers.

Here follows a complete list of the priests with their sūtras and gotras (cf. pages 49, 52):

Brahman:	Mūteḍam Śaṅkara Nārāyanan Nambudiri	sūtra: Āśvalāyana,	gotra: Viśvāmitra	PLATES 40, 53, 60A, 75A, 88, 108
Udgātā:	Muṭṭatukkāṭṭu Itti Ravi Nambudiri	sūtra: Jaiminīya,	gotra: Bhāradvāja	PLATES 73, 81B, 84, 93, 97, 103
Prastotā:	Tōṭṭam Narāyaṇan Nambudiri	sūtra: Jaiminīya,	gotra: Vāsiṣṭha	PLATES 50, 97, 103
Pratihartā:	Nellikat Vāsudevan Nambudiri	sūtra: Jaiminīya,	gotra: Bhāradvāja	PLATE 103
Subrahmaṇya:	Tōṭṭam Āryan Nambudiri	sūtra: Jaiminīya,	gotra: Vāsiṣṭha	PLATE 61
Hotā:	Nārāṇa Maṅgalath Nārāyaṇan Nambudiri	sūtra: Kauṣītaki,	gotra: Kāśyapa	PLATES 2, 38G, 39, 49, 50
Brāhmaṇācchaṃsin:	Tekkamparampattŭ Nārāyaṇan Nambudiri	sūtra: Kauṣītaki,	gotra: Kāśyapa	PLATES 55A, 56, 106
Maitrāvaruṇa:	Cherumukku Vaidikan Śrīdharan Nambudiri	sūtra: Kauṣītaki,	gotra: Kāśyapa	PLATES 43, 55A, 107
Potā:	Cherumukku Vaidikan Vallabhan Nambudiri	sūtra: Kauṣītaki,	gotra: Kāśyapa	PLATE 38D
Neṣṭā:	Cherumukku Vaidikan Vāsudevan Nambudiri	sūtra: Kauṣītaki,	gotra: Kāśyapa	PLATE 38E, 102
Acchāvāka:	Tekku Cherumukku Parameśvaran Nambudiri	sūtra: Kauṣītaki,	gotra: Kāśyapa	
Āgnīdhra or Agnīdh:	Kunnam Padmanābhan Nambudiri	sūtra: Kausītaki,	gotra: Kāśyapa	PLATES 38G, 59, 98B
Grāvastut:	Mūrtiedam Śaṅkaran Nambudiri	sūtra: Kauṣītaki,	gotra: Āṅgirasa	PLATES 38F, 104
Adhvaryu:	Cherumukku Vaidikan Kṛṣṇan Nambudiri	sūtra: Kauṣītaki,	gotra: Kāśyapa	PLATES 33, 11, 42, 63–65, 67–70, 81 A, 82, 85–89, 91, etc.
Pratiprasthātā:	Kavapra Marath Śaṅkaranārāyaṇan Nambudiri	sūtra: Kauṣītaki,	gotra: Āṅgirasa	PLATES 42, 44A, 58, 59, 81A, 82–83, 89, 108
Unnetā:	Kavapra Marath Nīlakaṇṭhan Nambudiri	sūtra: Kauṣītaki,	gotra: Āṅgirasa	PLATES 38C, 54
Sadasya:	Erkkara Rāman Nambudiri	sūtra: Kauṣītaki,	gotra: Viśvāmitra	PLATES 38B, 55B

PLATES 11, 69, 79

PLATE 45A

The avidvān was Vaikkākkara Rāman Nambudiri, sūtra: Kauṣītaki, gotra: Āṅgirasa. Chief *parikarmī*, "helper," was Muri Mundanath Śrīdharan Somayājipad, sūtra: Āśvalāyana, gotra: Bhārgava. The Soma merchant was Professor E. R. Sreekrishna Sarma, sūtra: Āpastamba (of the Taittirīya school of the Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda), gotra: Kāśyapa.

The avidvān or "Ignorant (Brahmin)" should be a Nambudiri brahmin eligible to perform Somayāga. There are several speculations about the meaning of his name. Some say he should not know what the adhvaryu has in his hand when he holds the svayamātṛṇṇā. Also, he takes a cow from the yajamāna and gives it to the adhvaryu, because, it is said, he does not own anything.

The Soma merchant is always a Tamil brahmin. He could not be a non-Brahmin Malayali of high caste, e.g., a Nāyar, because these cannot enter the sacrificial enclosure. And he could not be a Nambudiri, because Nambudiris are not merchants. Also, when asked whether the Soma is pure, and whether it comes from Mount Mūjavat (below page 347), he must always answer in the affirmative. A Nambudiri could not do this, because he always speaks the truth.

What are the priestly qualities for which these men are respected and have been chosen to officiate? The priests are chiefly praised for the clarity and precision of their pronunciation (sometimes called *akṣaraśuddhi*, "purity

PLATE 38

38A The two Akkitiripads. During the last decades before 1975, there were only two Akkitiripads, i.e., Nambudiris who had performed the Atirātra-Agnicayana. On the left is Nellikat Nīlakaṇṭhan Akkitiripad, on the right Cherumukku Vaidikan Vasudevan Akkitiripad.

38B Ērkkara Rāman Nambudiri, who had assumed the office of the sadasya priest, performing the Hiding Rite (nihnava) (see also Plates 55B).

38C The unnetā priest, whose main task is to pour the Soma liquid (see also Plate 54).

38D The potā, assistant to the hotā, at the ceremony of āpyāyana, "sprinkling the Soma with mantras".

38E The neṣṭā, assistant to the hotā, the youngest among the priests (see also Plate 102).

38F The grāvastut, who enters blindfolded to recite a hymn to the Soma pressing stones (see Plate 104); here engaged in the āpyāyana ceremony.

38G The agnīdh assisting the hotā to adjust his earstring.

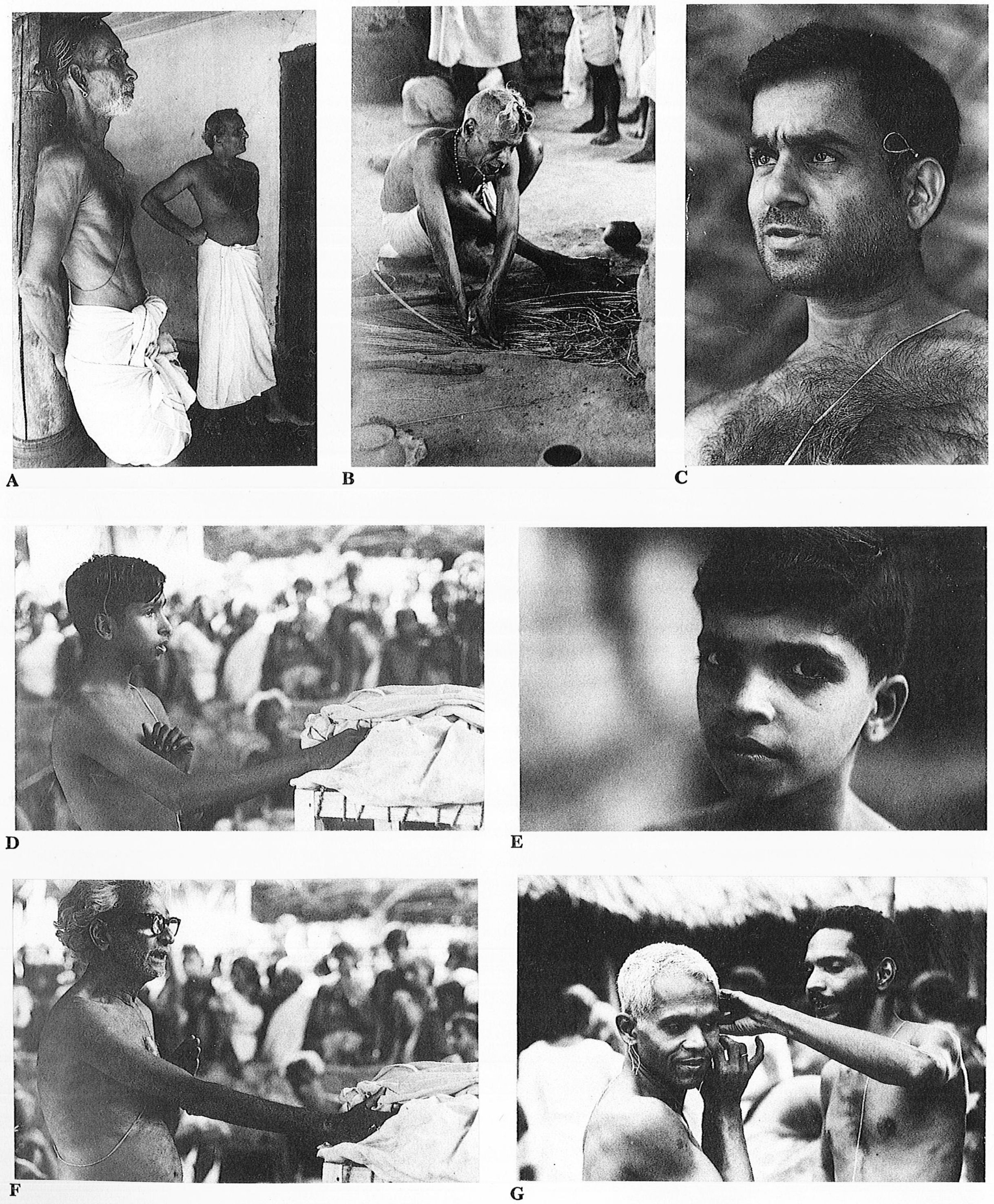
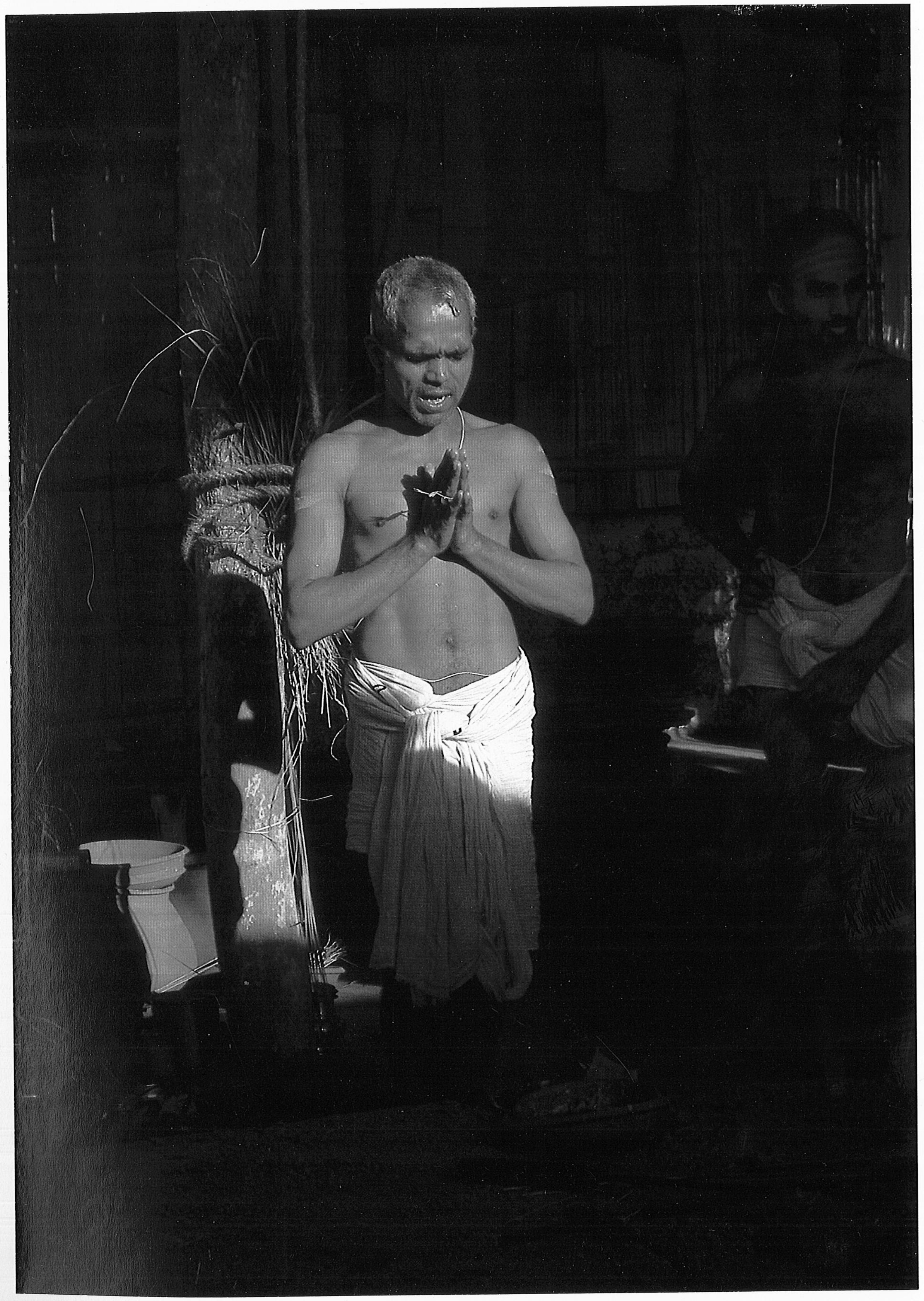


PLATE 39

The Hotā Recites



of syllable") and for their memory. The adhvaryu's voice has a ringing sound like that of a bell and an almost metallic precision which is also conspicuous in the enunciation of the maitrāvaruṇa, his younger brother. The hotā has a soft voice, but he is extremely firm. His prodigous memory is especially appreciated when he is engaged in reciting pieces such as the Aśvin's Recitation, which comprises a thousand mantras (see below pages 683–686). The long breath of all the reciters is excelled only by the Sāmavedins, whose melodic chants are valued for their musical beauty. It takes patience to detect, experience, and appreciate these features of recitation and chant, which play a large part in the evaluation of ritual expertise by Nambudiri connoisseurs. The accompanying cassettes, described in Volume II, may convey some of these qualities.

Other priestly qualities are pictured on the plates. As for the priests' dress, it is not Vedic, for all we know. It is the attire Nambudiri men adopt on important religious occasions. To put it in its proper context, I shall quote in full what Anantha Krishna Iyer, a Tamil brahmin, has to say on the subject:

> The Nambuthiris are very sparing in their clothing, and do not seem to feel the shame of walking about almost naked, a habit which is not countenanced by the *Smrithi* which they profess to follow. The men wear an under garment (*koupinam*), which is a strip of cloth, passing between the thighs, the ends being attached to a string round the loins both at the back and at the front. They are strict *Swadéshis* and would not, on any account, go in for Manchester piecegoods, which are *taboos* to them. They wear round their loins, stretching a little below the knee, a cloth of local manufacture, four or five cubits in length, two and a half or three cubits in breadth, with a coloured border or sometimes laced at the edges. They do not use silk or coloured cloth of any kind or plain white cloth without a border. It is considered very fashionable or dignifying to wear it rather higher than the loins, that is, about the pit of the stomach. A second small cloth (*thórthumundu*) is worn over the shoulders and the chest. At home or in a temple close by, when he is at prayers, he is almost naked, either covered by a small loin cloth or only with a *koupinam*, which is a repulsive sight to others. In this he is a marked contrast to the Tamil Brahmans of the east coast, who are neatly dressed on these occasions. Their mode of dressing on religious occasions is peculiar and is known as *Thattudukkal*, which consists of a long piece of country-made cloth tied round the loin with a portion of it passing between the thighs and 'tucked in at the front and behind, with a front portion arranged into a number of reduplications.' This mode of dressing exhibits a front covered by numerous folds hanging down from

> the waist to the feet, while the buttocks are almost exposed. They wear wooden sandals, but are not averse to leather ones, though they will not allow the heel of their foot to be covered up. On ordinary occasions, they dress like the Nayars. There is a tendency among the young men of these days to wear coats and caps, when they go out, and to be slightly influenced by the vices of modern civilisation.
>
> (1912, II, 281–282).

As mentioned before, the priests were engaged in rehearsals from December 1974 until April 1975. Nellikat Nīlakaṇṭhan Akkitiripad and Itti Ravi Nambudiri supervised the Sāmaveda rehearsals in Panjal, while Cherumukku Vaidikan and Erkkara supervised all other rehearsals, which took place in Shoranur. When the preparations were complete, the ceremonies could begin, but not until offerings were made, in their respective temples, to Dakṣiṇāmūrti and Gaṇapati.